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THE SLIPPERY SLOPE
AND OTHER PAPERS
ON SOCIAL SUBJECTS



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WILLIAM AMIAS BAILWARD.

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THE SLIPPERY SLOPE

AND OTHER PAPERS
ON SOCIAL SUBJECTS

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BY THE LATE
WILLIAM AMIAS BAILWARD, M.A.

"I am not at all disturbed at the prospect
of the slippery slope."

—The Rt. Hon. H. H. ASQUITH.
Hansard.



LONDON
JOHN MURRAY, ALBEMARLE STREET, W

1920



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INTRODUCTION

THESE papers were selected for publication by Mr Bailward shortly before the War; therefore in giving them to the public his friends feel that they are fulfilling his wishes. It may seem to some readers that as the Parliamentary Bills which are the subject of his keen criticism have most of them become Acts, it is of no use to cry over spilt milk. It must, however, be remembered that because an ill-advised measure becomes law it is not thereby endued with wisdom; and if, as has happened in the case of many of these Acts, criticism has unfortunately been proved by experience to be well-founded, it may act as a warning. It may not only prevent further mischief, but show the path of amendment.

Two things, at least, stand out prominently in these papers. The first is the remarkable lucidity of the writer's style. Mr Bailward was a master of English, and he was therefore able to say what he wished with ease and humour. Hence, though he deals with subjects which are too often considered uninteresting by the general public, they are handled with such lightness and even brilliancy of touch that there is hardly a dull line in the book.

The author is careful to point out that his writings are not intended to convert Socialists who have made up their minds and who have a settled policy; but to warn those who may still

be hesitating on the edge of the "slippery slope." There must be many men and women who have neither time, inclination, nor opportunity for studying the difficult problems of Social Science; but who listen readily to those who recommend the downhill path, partly because it appears to be the easier and follows the line of least resistance, but partly also because they do not want to be thought retrograde or out-of-date: they do not care to be treated with the pitying contempt of which the reformer who professes to disbelieve in the Laws of Political Economy has so large a stock-in-trade. To these such a paper as the one entitled "Social Study on Large Maps" would show clearly that the problems of to-day were those of hundreds and even thousands of years ago; that the remedies applied to social ills in ancient Greece and Rome failed, as they will do to-day, if the weakness and strength of human nature are alike disregarded by those who desire them.

Another characteristic of the author is his extreme fairness to his opponents. He invariably states the communistic view in the strongest possible way and presents the arguments against his own position with scrupulous care. He seems at times indeed to be forgetful or unconscious of the fact that he has already demolished them by invincible commonsense and the pitiless logic of facts.

The conclusions at which Mr Bailward arrives are based on a profound study of human nature, and a firm belief in the teaching of history and especially in the History of the Poor Law. It is a fashion of the present day to relegate the teaching and experience of the past, when they happen to be inconvenient, to a kind of "dump," regardless of the fact that the lessons were learnt at painful cost by our forefathers and that they burnt

their fingers severely in the process. "Dumps," as recent experience shows, have a disagreeable habit of exploding with sad results to individuals—the explosion of this social "dump" would mean disaster to the nation.

Mr Bailward was something of a prophet in the true meaning of the word, but not one who prophesied the smooth things to which the un-instructed public so readily listens. Such a paper as the "Psychology of Pauperism" is a short but careful study of what the consequences may be of pandering to the weaker side of human nature. There is an easy-going temper abroad which coolly takes it for granted that although certain results undoubtedly followed certain foolish deeds in past times, they are not likely to follow similar acts of folly now. If the question is asked, "why not?" the answer usually amounts to this: human nature has materially changed for the better. For this pleasant and comfortable assumption there is absolutely no warrant; on the contrary, the history of the past six years gives ample proof that undisciplined human nature in every class of life can be as idle, self-indulgent and cruel as it ever was.

The History of the English Poor Law may be dull, though there may be two opinions as to that. Modern Schools of Economics may relegate it to the rubbish heap—Professors may bury their learned heads in the sand and encourage their pupils to study the principles of Bolshevism, as the only things worth studying at the moment. But in spite of the contempt of the Schools, Poor Law History will repeat itself unless its lessons are heeded; and the warnings of unpopular but fearless prophets are even now being fulfilled. Must the procession of disastrous failures in Social experiment stretch out to the crack of doom?

All this does not mean that no reforms are

needed. Mr Bailward was a reformer in the best sense. But reforms, if they are to be vital and beneficent and not engines of destruction, must be based on principles which have stood the test of practical application and have been the foundations and bulwarks of national greatness and prosperity in the past.

As a nation we have already travelled far down the "slippery slope," and it sometimes seems to anxious watchers as if nothing could stop a fatal plunge into a gloomy abyss of national bankruptcy both of character and purse. Some among us, however, may hope to live long enough to see the inevitable reaction, the proverbial swing of the pendulum, the painful climb up. They may even experience the sinister satisfaction of unheeded prophets who can say : " We told you so."

SOPHIA LONSDALE.



BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE

It is not proposed to write a lengthy biographical notice of the Author of the following pages, but it is perhaps desirable to give a sufficient sketch of his career to indicate the authority and experience which lie behind his words.

William Amias Bailward was born in the Somersetshire village of Horsington in June 1852, and was educated at Rugby School and Balliol College, Oxford. He underwent a full legal training, which was of much value to him in after-life, but after being called to the Bar and having gone once or twice on circuit, he decided to abandon the Law as a profession and spent some years in foreign travel, visiting Australia, New Zealand, India, and other British colonies and possessions.

On his return finally to England he settled down to live in London with a sister who became at that time the guiding influence in his life.

Soon afterwards (in 1887) he first became interested in the work of the Charity Organisation Society and their Honorary Secretary in Bethnal Green, the district which remained the principal field of his labours until his death in March 1918.

He was for the greater part of that time a Guardian, and for some years Chairman of the Board of Guardians of that Union, and considering the great differences which must have existed between his views and those of many of his colleagues and of the electorate it is a remarkable tribute to his personality and moderation that he should have been constantly elected. It was greatly due, no doubt, to his influence that Poor

Law administration in Bethnal Green has formed an effective contrast with that of other East End Unions.

To the casual acquaintance he was known generally as a witty and agreeable companion and a good sportsman, in the best sense of the word, and only a few intimate friends were really cognisant of the great amount of time, labour, and research which he devoted to Poor Law and Charity Organisation work.

His chief interest, even in sport, always consisted in giving entertainment to his many friends and the younger members of his own family.

It is an indication of the confidence which was reposed in his judgment by all those with whom he was brought into contact, that at the time of his death he was a member of thirty-five Committees of various kinds, and had it not been for his extreme dislike of any kind of notoriety he might well have taken a leading part in political and civic life.

Amongst his papers was found a slip written shortly before his death, with the following quotation from Montaigne :—

“Je veux . . . que la mort me trouve plantant mes choux, mais nonchalant d'elle, et encore plus de mon jardin imparfait ;”

and these essays are a small part of the fruit of that unfinished garden.

His last illness was probably due to his assiduous attendance at the Bethnal Green Appeal Tribunal during the winter of 1916-17 for long hours and in all weathers.

A. C. B.

I PRINCES MANSIONS,
VICTORIA STREET, S.W. 1.

P R E F A C E

THE accompanying volume contains the substance of various articles and papers covering a period of twenty-five years, during which the author has been engaged in poor law and charitable administration in London. Two or three of these have already appeared in pamphlet form. They have been written at various times and upon various occasions, and have no special connection, except that they deal with different aspects of the same subject. They therefore contain some repetitions and some references that have been rendered obsolete by subsequent legislation. But the author ventures to republish them much as they were written, in the hope that the fact that they are based upon the experience of twenty-five years of practical work in a poor district may commend them to the consideration of students of the most difficult problem of local government. They are not addressed to socialists, who at least have a definite social theory, but to those who appear to be halting between two opinions. The author is indebted to the Editor of the "Times" for permission to republish the criticism of the Minority Report.

W. A. B.

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SOCIAL STUDY ON LARGE MAPS

THE late Lord Salisbury once advised those who wish to study foreign politics to do so upon large maps. The same advice may be given to those who wish to study social problems, and especially the problem of poverty ; for there is, perhaps, no department of social economy in which the field of observation is so wide and the phenomena are so persistent, and in which the sequence of cause and effect appears to be so inexorable. We are often warned against the danger of historical comparisons, and of course such a danger exists. There must always be controversy as to the interpretation of history, especially of that which is more remote. It is not suggested, therefore, that the comparisons should be pressed too closely ; but at least there is sufficient evidence to show that, even in the remoter periods of history, much the same things were being said and done in regard to the problem of poverty as are being said and done at the present time, and that certain principles and tendencies have established themselves beyond the reach of controversy.

The writer does not pretend to do more than to give the barest outlines of some of the best known phenomena in the social history of the past which appear to illustrate three of these principles and tendencies. Readers must form their own conclusions as to whether or no they are relevant to the social questions of the day. His purpose

will have been accomplished if he induces any one to examine the question more closely for himself.

The first point to be noted is that great measures of unrestricted State relief have had, from the earliest times, a monotonously disastrous effect upon the character of those who have received it. The Theoric Fund in Athens provided for an allowance of two oboli a day at first, and later three oboli to citizens attending public festivals and assemblies. Mr Grote defends this in principle "as the natural corollary of the religious idea associated with the festival" (cap. lxxv.); but he adds that "it was pushed to an abusive and mischievous excess in later times," and undoubtedly it ultimately degenerated into a great system of State relief to the poorer citizens. A writer of the times says that "Pericles by his Theoric Fund made his fellow-citizens babblers, idle and greedy, prodigal and dissolute." Aristotle points out its impotence to relieve poverty, "the demagogues distributed the surplus revenues to the poor, who received them all at the same time, and then they were in want again. It was only like pouring money through a sieve . . . the problem was to contrive how plenty and not poverty should become permanent" (Loch, "Charity and Social Life," p. 33, *Ar. Pol.* 1320a). The *Annona Civica* in Rome was equally disastrous to character, and equally futile as a measure for the relief of poverty. Initiated by Gracchus, B.C. 121, it at first ordained that corn should be sold to citizens at a cheap price. Later, Clodius, as a political move, made the distribution free. The distribution was originally quarterly, then it became monthly, and finally it was daily. It was estimated that at first only one-eighth of the citizens participated, and that in the time of Julius Cæsar the proportion was three-quarters. Cæsar reduced the numbers, but they eventually rose again; "in

the age which preceded the fall of the republic it was estimated that only two thousand citizens were possessed of an independent substance" (Gibbon, cap. xxxi.). Cicero, speaking prophetically at the time when the distributions were first made free, says that the measure was "welcomed by the people to whom it assured an ample food-supply without obligation to work; but it was looked askance at by thoughtful people, who saw that its result could only be to empty the Treasury, and to make the people live in idleness" (Cic. pro Sext. c. 43), and his prophecy was fulfilled to the letter. The *Annona* which was levied upon conquered nations came to an end when Rome was fighting for her life against foreign nations; but it had continued over many centuries, and we may quote Gibbon's description of the social conditions existing under the successors of Constantine: "For the convenience of the lazy plebeians, the monthly distributions of corn were converted into a daily allowance of bread. A great number of ovens were constructed and maintained at the public expense; and at the appointed hour each citizen who was furnished with a ticket ascended the flight of steps which had been assigned to his peculiar quarter or division, and received, either as a gift or at a very low price, a loaf of bread of the weight of three pounds for the use of his family," and what was the result? "From those stately palaces (the baths of Caracalla and Diocletian) issued a swarm of dirty and ragged plebeians, who loitered away whole days in the street or forum to hear news and hold disputes, who dissipated in extravagant gaming the miserable pittance of their wives and children, and spent the hours of the night in obscure taverns and brothels in the indulgence of gross and vulgar sensuality." With regard to their amusements, "The Roman people still considered the

circus as their home, their temple, and the seat of the Republic. The impatient people rushed at the dawn of day to secure their places, and there were many who passed a sleepless and anxious night in the adjoining porticoes. From morning to evening, careless of sun or rain, the spectators, who sometimes numbered four hundred thousand, remained in eager attention, their eyes fixed on the horses and charioteers, their minds agitated with hope and fear for the colours they espoused, and the happiness of Rome appeared to hang on the event of a race." The theatres were monopolised by "licentious farce, effeminate music, and splendid pageantry." When, in time of scarcity, all strangers were banished from the city, "singers and dancers were exempted from a law which was strictly enforced against the professors of the liberal arts." Such was the effect of public benevolences in Greece and Rome, and we have had much analogous experience in later times. It is hardly necessary to labour the point. Recent writers, such as Mr and Mrs Sidney Webb, are quite as emphatic in their condemnation of the evil of a "hypertrophied Poor Law," as were Cicero and other writers in their condemnation of similar largesse 2000 years ago.

Another point that is suggested by a study of the "large map" is that unrestricted public relief invariably falls eventually by its own weight, and that there is no ultimate refuge for the poor man in distress except in the unconstrained love and charity of his fellow-men. The "principle of acceleration," which, as Dr Chalmers tells us, is inherent in all poor laws, and of which more will be said hereafter, invariably causes the demand to outrun the supply with the result of an empty treasury as well as an emasculated people. In Athens the Theoric Fund "was carried to abusive and mischievous excess

in later times." In Rome the *Annona* grew from cheap corn to free corn, from free corn only to free corn, bacon, and oil, and was extended from a section of the population to practically all the poorer classes. And then the crash came. When Athens fell upon evil days the Theoric Fund had to be diverted to military purposes. When the same happened to Rome, and Sicily and Carthage were lost to the Empire, the treasury was exhausted, and the unhappy citizens, destitute of all power of self-maintenance, were thrown back upon voluntary charity and the Church. During the siege by Alaric, "the daily allowance of bread was reduced to one half, to one third, to nothing, and the price of corn continued to rise. The poorer citizens solicited the precarious charity of the rich, and for a while the public misery was alleviated by the humanity of the Empress Læta, who consecrated her princely revenue to the use of the indigent" (Gibbon, cap. xxxi.). The distributions of corn were finally discontinued after Theodoric, and the suffering of the people, enervated by centuries of pauperism, is a matter of history.

From this point of view we stand perhaps in a worse position even than Rome itself. The Roman benevolences were levied upon conquered nations; our own are levied upon the industry of the people themselves, and it is hardly possible to doubt that if our expenditure continues to increase at its present rate we shall some day find ourselves face to face with an empty treasury and a ruined industry. Lord Morley, speaking at Newcastle some years ago, put it thus: "Depend upon it," he said, "that the burden of taxation, however spread, however disguised, falls in the long run most heavily upon the shoulders of the working man," and a hard-headed, north-country audience greeted the remark with cheers. At the present

time there is a sense of uneasiness which is quite unprecedented amongst quiet and law-abiding people who busy themselves little with politics, but who subscribe most of the capital required for industrial enterprise. Consols are at a lower level than for many generations, and home securities are heavily depreciated all round. The investor stands aloof from enterprises in which British workmen are employed, because he may at any time lose his money owing to the conditions of the labour market and the growth of taxation,¹ and prefers to invest his savings in foreign enterprises which certainly give no direct employment to the British workman, and so home industries by which our people live are in danger of being gradually atrophied. We may recall Montesquieu's definition of socialism, "*aujourd'hui le pillage demain la famine.*"

Another feature of unrestricted public benevolence which has at all times been equally persistent and equally baneful is to be found in its use for political purposes. The Theoric Fund was used largely for the purpose of obtaining the popular suffrages. The throne, and sometimes the lives, of the Roman Emperors depended upon the munificence of their largesse. We find that even voluntary charity was similarly tainted in quite early times, that of the Roman patron towards his client being often a political expedient devoid of any sense of moral obligation. "The people," says Cicero, "have only one way of doing us a good turn and recognising our services to them, and that is to follow us in a crowd when we go to demand place and

¹ The annual meetings of the great Railway Companies have lately been held. In almost all cases there have been large reductions of dividend, and the chairman ascribe this mainly to two causes, namely, strikes and additional taxation due to the Insurance Act, which in the case of one railway alone amounts to £64,000 a year. The "Times" estimates that the Act will cost the railways a quarter of a million.

honour. It is fair that they whose hopes are centred in us, should do something for us. The least they can do is to give us their votes" (Cic. *Pro Murem.*, c. 34). Political charity is not unknown in these days, but its effect must always be insignificant in comparison with that of public relief which draws upon the public exchequer, and which calls for no personal sacrifice from those who administer it, but which, on the contrary, paves the way to "place and honour." Similarly, in modern times, the path to political eminence and to the gratification of personal ambitions by public benevolence lies, as a rule, over the backs of the poor. We have seen the disastrous process at work in many countries and we see it in our own, for, unhappily, the leaders of both political parties make use of "social reform," in the sense of great measures of public relief, for party purposes without any disguise. A leading statesman on one side advocates a particular measure on the ground that it offers "ninepence for fourpence." Just as this is written, a speech by a leader on the other side is reported in the "*Times*," in which, under the heading "How to win the next Election," social reform is put forward as a principal means of securing the votes of the electorate ("*Times*," 29th July 1912). The leaders have, in fact, to submit to the dictation of party agents throughout the country, who send urgent messages that this or that measure of "social reform" is essential for immediate party purposes, with a cynical disregard of ulterior consequences.

There are several other questions of poor relief which it is interesting to study "on a large map," because we see that many practical problems which are now before the public were equally pressing two thousand years ago. For instance, we are now much concerned with the question of feeding of

school children, and we are alarmed at a falling birth-rate. Augustus, "in order to increase the free population," initiated a system of subsidy to poor families in proportion to the number of their children, and the system was continued and extended until the exhaustion of the treasury in the later Empire. We may in this connection recall Pitt's abortive poor law which had the same object. Again, we have recently adopted the principle of a minimum wage. Diocletian endeavoured to arrive at the same result by fixing a maximum price for food. One result of this was that at the least appearance of scarcity all strangers and even Italians were expelled from Rome. The experiment was an unqualified failure.

Again, we now hear on every side denunciations of the selfish luxury of the idle rich, but they are as nothing to similar denunciations by the fathers of the Church. "You sit down to a sumptuous feast," says St Chrysostom, "when Christ has not the barest necessities! You drink the wine of Thasos when He has not a glass of water to quench His thirst." "What will you say to your Judge?" says St Basil, "who clothe your walls with splendour and leave your fellow-men naked, who let your corn rot in your barns and give none of it to the poor. If an unhappy man begs of you, you say that you have nought to give him. But the very hand with which you repulse him glitters with a priceless jewel and gives the lie to your words. How many poor debtors might be set free, how many houses rebuilt with that ring? Your wardrobe would suffice to clothe a whole people and you send the poor naked away" (Chastel, "*Etudes Historiques sur l'influence de la Charité*," p. 195-6: Chrys., Hom. 48; Basil, Hom. in Div., c. 4). St Jerome says, "All riches are the result of iniquity. Every rich man is unjust or the heir of an unjust

man." Truly there is nothing new under the sun.

Or if we regard the matter from another point of view we find that one side of human nature has changed but little. "Socrates the historian mentions a Jew who, pretending to embrace Christianity, went in succession to the various communities both heretical and orthodox to ask to be baptised, and received from all valuable presents until Paul, Bishop of the Novatians, discovered the fraud, it is said, by a miracle" (Soc. Hist. Eccl., Bk. vii. c. 17). We hear, too, in the Early Church of "spiteful and slanderous widows who instead of calling down the blessing of God on their Bishop made it their business to find out what others had received and then complained of the injustice of the distribution of alms" (Apost. Const. iii. 12-14). We even find that an organisation of charity was initiated by the Church, doubtless as the result of those and similar abuses. Each Bishop was directed to attach to himself a steward for the administration of the funds of his diocese. The deacons and subdeacons who were called "the hand, the mouth, and the soul of the Bishops" were his agents for the distribution of alms. They kept a register of the families that they had to relieve regularly. The deacons' duties were "to write down the names on a special register, to which the name of 'case paper'¹ was given later, and to enter the name, the sex, the profession, and position of each applicant and to obtain the most circumstantial and exact information" (Chastel, p. 99; Cyprian, Ep. 37 and Ep. 38; Acts vi. 3-11).

Looking then at the "large map" we find that we have advanced surprisingly little in regard to these matters since the beginning of the Christian

¹ A free translation of *matricula*. Chastel, p. 99; Epitom de Eccl. Petr., c. 151.

era. It is, however, rather remarkable that a considerable section of the Anglican Church at the present time appears inclined to look to bureaucracy and compulsion as a solution of the problem of poverty. We may judge from the words of St Chrysostom, how great a departure this is from the tenets of the Early Church. "You cannot," he says, "like St Peter, cure the cripple : give at least your gold. I do not force you to do it if you do not wish to. I use no compulsion but I conjure you to give at least a part to the poor. God might have constrained us to almsgiving : He has preferred to obtain it from our free will so that there may be room for reward" (Chrys., Hom. 90). St Irenæus, comparing the almsgiving of the Jews with that of the Christian Church, says that the "one is the offering of slaves, the other that of free men." (Iren., de Hares, iv. 34).

We have also the records over many centuries of attempts repeated again and again, to make work for the unemployed. In ancient times they degenerated into a system of slavery (Chastel 314, Wallon Hist., t. iv., p. 3, c. 4 and 5). In more recent times we have had some 230 years' experience of the old poor law which was intended to "set the poor on work," and we have had the experience of the national workshops in Paris in 1793 and 1848. Finally we have had seven years' experience of the Unemployed Workmen Act, which was passed as a measure of social reform in the teeth of the warnings of those who had studied these questions most closely. And what is the result? The Act has recently been condemned in the most unqualified terms by the Reports of the Commission, which are unanimous at least in this. Yet, in spite of this condemnation, already some three years old, it still goes on. So difficult is it in these matters to retrace a false step.

It has already been said that readers must judge for themselves as to the relevance of this past history to the history of the present day. But there are many ominous coincidences which must at least awaken grave anxiety in the minds of those who love their country. The public charge for relief has about quadrupled itself in the last twenty-five years, yet there is no sign that it is improving the condition of the people or satisfying their demands. On the contrary, a fierce appetite for relief appears to have sprung up amongst them similar to that which prevailed in Rome under the Empire. Labour unrest, strike succeeding strike with constant scenes of violence, the repeated repudiation of contracts solemnly entered into, recalls the turbulence of the pauperised Romans. We have even in these days citizens who "loiter away whole days in the town to hear news and hold disputes." We have citizens who "dissipate in extravagant gaming the miserable pittance of their wives and children." We have leaders of democracy who, like Clodius, clamour more and more for doles and free maintenance for all; theatrical display and pageantry of all kinds multiply daily; games and amusements monopolise the public mind; huge crowds look on in eager attention at athletic contests, "their minds agitated with hope and fear for the colours they espouse." "The happiness of the country often appears to hang upon the issue of a single match."

The increase in the dependent population and the indifference with which this is regarded by government is perhaps an even more alarming sign of the times. Till lately the test of the well-being of a country was held to be found in a maximum of independence and a minimum of dependence. So, too, of old Plato would have no beggars in his Republic. But the modern statesman cares nothing

about these things, and yet if history has anything to tell us it is that they are the most important of all. It is the same with pauperism; the word is hardly mentioned in these days, yet no social reform can succeed which ignores it. In another chapter we have tried to indicate the subtlety of the problem; social reformers must face it or fail.

"Social Reform" is, of course, a vague term capable of many interpretations. It may mean, as many believe, that the whole fabric of society as it has evolved itself throughout the ages requires a drastic reconstruction. But we may fairly ask whether, if that is the case, it would not be far better for the country that this reconstruction should be effected by a short and decisive process rather than by a slow process of progressive eleemosynaryism. For social reform so far has been interpreted almost exclusively in that sense. One great measure of State relief has succeeded another and "we are only at the beginning." Is social reform of this kind likely to effect the purpose at which it aims? Until quite lately the contrary opinion was held both by statesmen and sociologists. The experience of the "large map" was accepted without question, and it was held that great measures of State relief tend to aggravate the intensity of the problems of poverty. But suddenly an entirely opposite policy has been adopted. It is true that certain qualifications of this policy are dimly foreshadowed in the future, but we have to deal with the facts as they are, and it is clear that our social policy up to the time of the Insurance Act has been a kind of lopsided socialism. The benefits have been kept well to the fore, and the discipline, which is the necessary corollary, as far as possible out of sight. The Insurance Act has been the first foretaste of discipline, and its reception seems to show that the working man is not inclined

to barter his personal liberty for fruits however "rare and refreshing." But a much more severe discipline than this will be required if the State is to accept all the responsibilities proposed for it. The nature of this discipline is to some extent foreshadowed in the Minority Report with its training and disciplinary colonies, its organisation of the labour market and exclusion of large sections of the population from economic work. But much more than this will be necessary. If, as is suggested, the maintenance of all children is to be undertaken by the State, conditions will have to be imposed upon the production of children. Already there is much talk of "segregation," and the policy of the stud farm is beginning to shape itself. It remains to be seen whether the working man will submit to it.

The special danger of the moment appears to be lest we should fall between the stools of individual liberty and State socialism. Each of them, taken separately, is a clear social policy capable of being translated into action as a homogeneous whole. But now we have a kind of hybrid system which is neither the one nor the other, a machine made up of "spare parts" by different makers which are neither adjusted nor adjustable. All socialists recognise that socialist benefits involve socialist discipline. But political action (except in the case of the Insurance Act) has heretofore followed the line of least resistance. Where discipline has been politically easy, there it has been introduced; where it has been politically difficult, there it has been carefully eschewed. The compulsory discipline of masses of men who are also voters is a thorny subject for any government, and no statesman has yet shown much sign of a desire to handle it. But if legislation is to continue on its present lines discipline is the necessary corollary. At present

we have most of the evils of a certain policy without any of the safeguards.

The need of the moment, then, is to clear the issues and to make up our minds between the alternative policies. When we have so made up our minds we must carry out the one or the other in its integrity. There is much confusion at present, because every one recognises that State action is necessary in certain public services, such as national defence, police, sanitation, education, and the relief of destitution. The fact that the State has done these things, with a varying amount of success, is used as an argument that it should do everything, and the ordinary citizen finds some difficulty in making up his mind as to where the line should be drawn. But the issues now appear to be gradually clearing themselves. In the last few years the State has entered upon a course of action which appears to be closely distinguishable from the functions enumerated above because it clearly affects the private life and conduct of individual citizens high and low. It is, for example, now trying to impose compulsory charity upon the well-to-do, compulsory thrift upon the poor, and compulsory virtue upon all classes of the population. It has abandoned the old "destitution" principle in public relief, and proposes to bring about universal material welfare through the poor law or its equivalent. All this, of course, differs fundamentally from the State action which has hitherto commended itself to the good sense of the community. The authors of this new departure are actuated by the best intentions, but we cannot on that account allow their policy to pass without criticism. The first thing that is plain is that it is a policy of despair—of despair, on the one hand, of human nature, of despair, on the other, that the industrial classes can ever live by their labour. There are many who believe that this despair is

not justified in either case, and who believe even more strongly that if we accept things as inevitable we make them inevitable. We may ask, moreover, why if human nature is so poor a thing we should entrust our destinies blindfold to human beings who come to the front in the vicissitudes of party politics and who may perhaps be no better than ourselves. The ethics of party politics are not encouraging. Or if we turn to the prospects of creating universal prosperity by Act of Parliament, we may ask what assurance we have that this is an ideal capable of attainment. All that we know so far is that the legislation of the last twenty-five years which has been directed to this end has brought us no nearer our goal. One measure of relief has succeeded another, yet the cry of poverty is louder than ever, and there is constant asseveration that the "rich are growing richer and the poor growing poorer." Prominent Socialists are beginning to give voice to their doubts. The social question, they say, can never be settled by doles; "nothing is of the slightest economic value to the working man that does not increase his wages"—every other endowment is "charity, covert or overt" ("New Age," 1911). Yet if history has anything to teach us it is that doles of relief act in supplementation of wages and keep them low, and in that manner prevent the very solution of the problem of poverty which everyone most earnestly desires.

Yes! we are told all this may have been true in the past, but with the advance of science nothing is impossible. Failures in the past do not constitute a valid reason why we should not try again. And it is loose reasoning of this kind which has impelled us again and again to repeat old failures under the name of experiments, which is surely a fatuous proceeding. Let us experiment by all means, but let us be sure either that the experiments are new ones

or that the conditions have changed sufficiently to justify a renewal of the old ones. It is quite true that science has won great victories in the physical world : it has taught us to annihilate time and space and to conquer (with limitations) the sea and the air. It has made discoveries of enormous value in surgery and medicine. One thing it has failed to do, and that is to conquer human nature, and nothing but human nature itself can do that. This is why attempts to impose morality and conduct by Act of Parliament and to legislate in defiance of economic tendencies which are based upon human nature, are foredoomed to failure. Over and over again such attempts have been made ; the legislation of the Commonwealth was the forerunner of the profligacy of the times of Charles II. We have had repeated sumptuary laws : we have had laws fixing prices, and laws fixing wages, but they have all failed in turn and all been abandoned. It has been left to the twentieth century to endeavour to resuscitate them.

The times are full of strange philosophies, the general upshot of whose teaching seems to be that we should act upon the impulse of the moment and distrust the evidence of our senses. "Futurists" would ignore everything that happened even yesterday. Socialist poets denounce "the foul hag experience" as the enemy of progress, and there is a wealth of literature of the same description. We are told to believe that instinct is a surer guide than reason. There is nothing new about this. The Pyrrhonists, more than 2000 years ago, held "that both the senses and consciousness are absolutely untrustworthy, and that just as much can be said against any opinion as in favour of it" (Funk and Wagnall's "Dict.," Pyrrhonism). So that these philosophers have advanced little beyond their predecessors. To them, of course, history and precedent either have no meaning or are

actually obnoxious. Theorists of this sort always gain a certain following from amongst those who despair of good by evolution. But they are only a phase in the world's history. The bulk of humanity believes, and will continue to believe, that they must make the best use that they can of their reason, even if it be fallible. They may be swayed to and fro by gusts of feeling that blow this way and that, but they are not in the least likely to surrender their ultimate right of judgment. They will probably continue to believe that no progress can be real and lasting which does not, like freedom, "broaden down from precedent to precedent." If this is the case the study of the "large map" becomes obligatory upon all those who sincerely and with singleness of purpose set their faces towards social progress.

SOME EARLY HISTORY OF POOR RELIEF IN ENGLAND

Most modern treatises upon the poor law confine themselves to the period about and subsequent to the Poor Law Amendment Act of 1834, and comparatively little attention has been paid of late to the earlier history of the subject. The later period is, undoubtedly, the most striking phase of our poor law history, and no one would wish to minimise its importance. Yet the Elizabethan poor law had been in operation for some 230 years previous to that time, and the record of those years is quite as instructive to students as that of the years which succeed them. It is true that few early figures or statistics have been preserved, but there is abundant contemporary evidence to show that the main problem was the same in the earlier stages as in the later.

In England it dates from the decay of feudalism and the emancipation of the serf, when, as Professor Henderson of Chicago says, "the liberated labourer became free to be a pauper" ("Modern Methods of Charity," p. x.). In the Middle Ages undoubtedly pauperism was largely fostered by the abbeys, "dispensing," says Fuller, "mistaken charity, promiscuously entertaining some who did not need it and many who did not desire it: yea! these abbeys did but support the poor whom they themselves

had made." At the dissolution of the abbeys these poor people were thrown again upon the world, and not only they but a large number of monks and lay brothers and servitors employed in and about the abbeys. Soon after came the Elizabethan Poor Law of 1601, under which for the first time a compulsory assessment was made for the relief of the poor and which is the basis of our present Poor Law. It is with the period succeeding 1601 and up to the reform of the Poor Law in 1834 that this chapter will deal. It is impossible to give more than a very imperfect sketch of it within the compass of an article.

The compulsory assessment or "fund set aside for the relief of the poor" in 1601 was to be applied to two main purposes, viz., "the relief of the impotent and the setting of the able-bodied to work." Doubtless the authors of the measure believed that they had solved the problem, and it may be conceded that the Act does appear to cover the whole ground. Looking back on it now by the light of 300 years' experience, we may say that its first object has been largely realised but that its second is as far off as ever. The suggestion of the time was that the able-bodied poor should be set to work by means of "parish stocks," or as they would now be called, "municipal workshops." Stores of hemp, flax, and wool, and other materials were to be collected in every parish to be spun and woven and worked up by the poor, and for the next 200 years that was the method adopted in many places.

The Act of Elizabeth had not been long in operation when the difficulties began to show themselves, and from that time forwards hardly a year passed without the issue of some pamphlet

or scheme for better methods of helping the poor. The writers are all agreed upon the facts as to the "growing misery and numbers of the poor," the growth of the poor rates, the need of better means for setting the poor to work, the "nuisance of beggars," and so forth. Sir Frederick Eden, in his "State of the Poor," gives a list of some 300 publications of the sort, and their chief interest lies, first, in their numbers; secondly, in their unanimity as to the facts and the failure of existing methods; thirdly, in the evidence they afford of the solicitude for better social conditions even in these early days. A strong vein of humanity runs through them all, and many of the best men of the day, whose names are even now household words, applied their minds to the subject. To us at the present time it is especially curious to notice that almost all the arguments used nowadays on the one side or the other, were used again and again in these pamphlets, that most of the remedies proposed nowadays were proposed in substance one and even two hundred years ago. The causes alleged for the increase of pauperism were almost identical with those which we hear nowadays from every platform, and which we read of in every publication upon the subject—on the one side the "engrossing of farms," or, in other words, the consolidation of landed property, the cruelty of the rich, the substitution of machinery for hand labour, and even foreign competition; on the other, drink, imprudence, idleness, and the relaxation of discipline. What strikes one chiefly about it all, and that with a feeling of despair, is the want of finality, the constant fluctuation of opinion, and the never-ending action and reaction.

It is clear that the second object of the Elizabethan Poor Law, namely, the "setting of the poor to work," was, probably owing to its inherent

difficulty, allowed gradually to lapse early in the day over a great part of the country, and the easier method of relieving the poor by allowances of money without labour, adopted in its place. This, as will presently appear, was rather the fault of the system than of the administration, though it is constantly alleged as a ground of complaint by a succession of writers. The experience of 300 years has shown the impossibility of creating work for the unemployed outside of that which is required by the economic demands of the community. Towards the end of the eighteenth century, parish authorities were reduced to such expedients as making men stand in the parish pound for so many hours, or of making them dig holes and fill them up again, as a condition of relief. The Central Unemployed Body is at the present time confronted with similar difficulties. Generally speaking, the system became one of outdoor relief either entirely without labour or coupled with labour which was purely nominal and absolutely useless.

It is not proposed to do more than to glance at a few of the pamphlets in question, which have special interest either from the eminence of the writers, or intrinsically. It may be interesting to note that, even before the Elizabethan Poor Law, as early as 1552, there was complaint of the "intolerable hurts to the nation from tippling houses," and "tippling in alehouses" was made an offence by a statute of James I. A pamphlet published in 1614, entitled "England's Way to Win Wealth," contains a project for the establishment of herring fishing as a means of employing the poor, and concludes, "wherefore, seeing that we can excel all other nations wastefully to spend money, let us in one thing learn from other nations to get thousands out of His Majesty's seas."

In 1622 a pamphlet called "Grievous Grones of the Poore by a Well-wisher who wisheth that the Poor of England might be so provided for that none need go a-begging," complains that the statutes were not enforced. "Though the number of these poore do daily increase . . . many of these parishes turneth forth their poore, yea, and their lustie beggars that will not worke . . . to begge, filche, and steale for their maintenance, so that the country is pitifully pestered."

In 1646 there was published "Stanleyes Remedy, or How to Reform Wandering Beggars, etc.; wherein is showed that Sodomes Sin of Idleness is the Poverty and Misery of this Kingdom." This pamphlet is entitled "The Cantation and Conversion of Mr Stanley, formerly an Innes of Court gentleman; he afterwards by lewd company became a highway robber. Having his life pardoned, he loaths his wicked course of life, and writes to King James shewing a meanes and remedy by which the poore of this Kingdom may be greatly relieved by means of workhouses in all cities and parishes; and how by this means wandering, beggary, idleness, and a certainly shameful end, will be prevented amongst manie."

In 1669 Sir Joseph Child published his "Discourse on Trade." He conceives that the "sad and wretched condition of the poor" is owing to a radical defect in the laws, and proposes to set up "Fathers of the poor after the manner of the Familiars of the Inquisition in Spain." A pamphlet of 1673 entitled "The Grand Concern of England Explained" estimates the poor rate at £840,000. This it says "is employed only to maintain idle persons. Doth great hurt rather than good. Makes a world of poor more than there would otherwise have been . . . men and women growing so proud and idle that they will not work but lie upon the parish

where they dwell for maintenance." It proposed that instead of giving parish allowances both old and young should be set to work upon spinning, weaving, lacework, etc. It further ascribes the increase of the poor to the introduction of stage-coaches and consequent decrease of employment in connection with saddle-horses, an argument which foreshadows numerous arguments as to the effects of the introduction of machinery in later times.

In 1677 one Andrew Garranton proposes a heavy duty upon foreign commodities as a means of giving employment to the poor. The title of his work is "England's improvement by land and sea. How to outdo the Dutch without fighting, to pay debts without money, to set at work all the poor in England with the growth of our own lands." Andrew Garranton was the first of the Tariff Reformers.

Thomas Firmin, a philanthropic merchant of London, published in 1678 a letter to Archbishop Tillotson on "proposals for employing the poor." He had established a house of industry in Aldersgate in which he laid up "hemp and flax" for spinning and weaving, which he commends for imitation. He answers various hypothetical objections to his scheme, but there is one which he confesses himself unable to answer, viz., how to dispose of the manufactured goods. Sir F. Eden tells us that Firmin's workhouse had not a prolonged existence. Four years later Firmin confesses that it had "not been able to bear its own charges," and had been largely supported by charitable people. One feature of his scheme was that the work should be done in people's own homes. It would be "altogether unreasonable and unprofitable to bring people to a public workhouse," an early anticipation of the aversion to indoor relief. Firmin would

"badge" all parish poor, "by virtue of which badge they are permitted to go into the parish at such an hour of the day and receive such broken bread and meat as their neighbours have to give . . . neither should these poor people go under such a dishonourable name as beggars but be called invited guests." A similar objection is now often raised against the use of the name "pauper."

About the same time Sir Matthew Hale published "A Discourse touching Provision for the Poor." Of the Act of Elizabeth he makes the pithy remark, "The plaster is not so large as the sore."

In 1685 Dr Davenant, in co-operation with Gregory King, the statistician of the day, published his political essays. He points out that "one limb of the body politic is drawing away the nourishment from the other," and that "the poor laws seem only to encourage vice and sloth in the nation." He proposes the formation of a corporation with a capital of £300,000 for employing the poor.

John Locke, the author of the "Essay upon the Human Understanding," was asked to draw up a report upon the subject for the Board of Trade in 1697. The "multiplying of the poor and the increase of the poor rate," he says, "has proceeded neither from scarcity of provisions nor from want of employment since God has blessed these times with plenty . . . it can be nothing else but the relaxation of discipline and the corruption of manners." The chief remedy proposed by him are "working schools" for the children of the poor, with maintenance for children between three and fourteen years of age. Of his proposals Eden says a hundred years later "that they will at least afford this consolation to the many patriotic, though unsuccessful, philanthropists who since his time have attempted the arduous work

of repairing this portion of the legislative fabric, that even so great a man as Mr Locke attempted it to but little purpose."

Richard Dunning, a Devonshire gentleman, published at Exeter in 1696 a pamphlet "Bread for the Poor." He points out that in some Devonshire parishes the poor rate "had in a few years advanced from 40s. to £40 and was likely to double in a short time." The cause of this, he says, is (1) profuseness of diet, paupers drinking nothing but strong beer, and bread of the finest wheat flour; (2) idleness. "Persons receiving parish pay presently become idle alledging that the parish is bound to maintain them, and that in case they should work it would only favour the parish, from whom they say they shall have no thanks." His pamphlet is of special interest because it is one of the first which definitely advocates the adoption of the workhouse test—"Careless surly sorts," he says, "now (that is to say when offered admission) find themselves at a loss: they must either humour and comply with the tradesmen who have stocks and serve them, or work in the workhouses and submit to that government. Being reduced to that dilemma they will choose the first and rather comply with a master of their own choosing than of the Mayor's."

A Mr Cary of Bristol about two years later published an "Essay on Employing the Poor" very much upon the same lines. He, like Dunning, ascribes the increase in the poor rates to idleness, to alehouses and idle tippling, and "to games and sports which draw men away from labour." He proposes the establishment of workhouses as a restraint upon idleness, and that rates be made with more equality in cities and great towns, as under existing conditions "their chief dependence must be upon these but one step above their own

conditions." He is probably the earliest advocate of equalisation of poor rates and the first to point out that the burden of maintaining the paupers falls chiefly upon the poor. Cary's description of his own experience in Bristol where he took the leading part in poor law reform, and of his difficulties with the mayor and others has a curiously modern flavour; similar difficulties are now met with every day by poor law reformers. His efforts resulted in "a great abatement" of the number of the poor, but the workhouse was not financially successful, and in three years made a loss of £600.

Towards the end of the seventeenth century and at the beginning of the eighteenth there was a reaction in the direction of indoor relief which was probably chiefly due to the examples at Exeter and Bristol. Up to this time the word workhouse was ambiguous. It might either be a place from which work was given out to be done in the home as was the case with that of Thomas Firmin, or it might be a place in which the poor received their board in return for work done or by way of maintenance. From this time forward the word began gradually to be accepted in the latter sense. Shortly afterwards many other places followed suit with workhouses upon the Bristol lines. In 1725 "an account of several workhouses" was published by Mr Matthew Marryett of Olney in Bucks, who was the chief mover in the matter. The effect of these workhouses in reducing rates was immediate and striking, and showed itself in all cases within two or three years.

In St Andrews, Holborn, the rates fell from	£1000	to	£750
„ St Paul's, Bedford	300	„	177
„ West Ham the rates were reduced by one half			
„ St Albans the rates fell from	566	„	200
„ Hemel Hempstead the rates fell from	730	„	388
„ Chatham	845	„	574

In Maidstone the rates fell from	£1062 to £530
„ Tunbridge „ „	570 „ 380
„ Market Harborough the rates fell from	170 „ 100
„ St Martins, Leicester „ „	200 „ 100
„ Bradford-on-Avon „ „	700 „ 400
„ Chertsey „ „	595 „ 395
„ Bristol they paid off debts and saved £3000	

Of these workhouses Eden says that "they spurred on many to labour for a livelihood who would not work as long as they were permitted to receive a weekly allowance from the parish." In Beverly, Yorkshire, of 116 receiving parish pay only eight came in when the out-relief was stopped. In Oxford the rates were reduced one-half, and a contemporary writer says "some who received alms of the parish appear to have money of their own and strive to work to keep themselves out of these (as they call them) confinements." By an Act of George I. the overseers were authorised to refuse other relief to those who declined the workhouse.

In 1704 Daniel Defoe presented a petition to Parliament entitled "Giving Alms no Charity and employing the Poor a Grievance to the Nation." Recent legislation, he urges, has been mischievous to the nation, tending to the "destruction of our trade and to increase the number and misery of the poor." He contends that the object of all statesmanship should be to enable men to live by their labour and to *raise the poor out of their poverty*. He points out that good husbandry is "no English virtue." The English are "the most 'lazy diligent' people in the world. . . . The English get estates, the Dutch save them, an Englishman earns 20s. a week and just lives, a Dutchman grows rich and leaves his children in a good position. An Englishman works till he has his pockets full of money and will then go and be idle, or perhaps drunk, till it is all gone. . . . From hence comes poverty, parish

charges, and beggary." The real cure is to make drunkards take care of wife and children; spend-thrifts lay up for a wet day; idle, lazy fellows diligent; and thoughtless, sottish men provident." If this were done there would be no need to "transpose our manufactures and confound our trade. . . . For every skein of worsted spun in a workhouse there must be a skein the less spun by some poor person or family that spun it before . . . to set poor people to work in the same thing that other poor people are employed upon before is giving to one what you take away from another, putting a vagabond in the honest man's employment." Defoe was the first to lay his finger upon the central difficulty of manufactured employment, which is even now very imperfectly understood by the public in general. It is a difficulty which has been very obvious to all those who are engaged in the administration of the Unemployed Workmen's Act.

The next writer of note who dealt with the question was Mandeville, who in 1733 published "The Fable of the Bees," in which he attacks Charity Schools, which were the favourite panacea of his day. He anticipates the present reaction against purely intellectual education. Education, he says, should fit a man for his position in life, and his language is vigorous. "Going to school is, in comparison with working, idleness, and the longer boys continue in this easy sort of life the more unfit they will be when grown up for downright labour both as to strength and inclination." Moreover, "the poor have nothing to stir them up to labour but their wants, which it is wisdom to relieve but folly to cure."

Henry Fielding, police magistrate and novelist, wrote in 1754 his "Enquiry into the Causes of the late Increase of Robbers," with a chapter upon the

Poor Laws. He says, "It must be a matter of astonishment that in a country where the poor are beyond all comparison more liberally provided for than in any other part of the habitable globe there should be found more beggars, more distress and miserable objects than are to be seen throughout all the states of Europe." He quotes, though not to agree with him, the opinion of a Mr Shaw—a forerunner of Mr Bernard Shaw?—which is to this effect: "There are few, if any, nations where the poor are more neglected or in a more scandalous nasty condition than in England, whether this is owing to that natural inbred cruelty for which Englishmen are so much noted amongst foreigners or to that medley of religions which are so plentifully sown and so carefully cherished, amongst us, who think it enough to take care of themselves and take a secret pride and pleasure in the poverty and distresses of those of another persuasion." Fielding, like Defoe, is of opinion that the cause of the evil is to be found in the "improper regulating" of the poor. He says that the second object of the 43rd Elizabeth, namely the employment of those able to work, has never been carried out. "To say the truth, as this law hath been perverted in execution it were perhaps to be wished that it had never been made." Unlike Defoe he believes that it is possible to find work for the poor, though he admits its great difficulty. In a subsequent pamphlet he produced a scheme for the construction of huge workhouses which does not appear to have received any attention from the legislature. Of the existing poor rate he says that it is a question whether the rich or poor are more dissatisfied since "the plunder of the one sends so little to the real advantage of the other, for while a million yearly is raised from the former many of the latter are starved, many more languish on in want and misery." In another

chapter he speaks of a "new kind of drunkenness unknown to our ancestors which is lately sprung up amongst us and which if not put a stop to will infallibly destroy a great part of the inferior people—that, namely, which is acquired by the strongest intoxicating liquors and particularly of that poison called gin."

In 1761 we come across another aspect of the question. In that year an Act was passed for the registration of children under four years of age received into workhouses. The Act was passed largely owing to the exertions of a Mr Hanway, the mortality amongst parish children at that time being enormous. Mr Hanway gives instances in which every child received into workhouses under a twelvemonth old had died within the year. Child desertion reached an appalling figure owing to the facilities provided by the Poor Law and by the Foundling Hospital. Of the latter we are told that the admissions increased from 100 in 1756 to 4000 in 1760. "Infants were sent to them from villages 50, 100, or even 200 miles distant." The conditions were the same in Paris, where they had their Hospices des Enfants Trouvés. Of 18,000 children baptised in Paris in 1768, 6000 were received in the Foundling Hospital. Arthur Young tells us that of 100,000 received in this manner in sixteen years, only 15,000 survived. Speaking of Foundling Hospitals, he says that they "encourage that vicious procreation which from its misery will not deserve the name of population . . . an encouragement of vice and inhumanity, and a public premium given to the banishment of the best feelings of human nature." Child desertion is still a very burning question, as everyone who has administered the Poor Law will know, but at least we can say that we have nothing approaching such conditions in these days. Infantile mortality is

also a serious question, which is now engaging a large part of the public attention, but here again we can say that the present conditions are as dust in the balance compared with those of 150 years ago.

In 1764 Dr Burn published his "History of the Poor Laws": his proposals contain little that is new except that it should be made a penal offence to give money to beggars.

In 1772 Baron Maseres published a "Proposal for establishing Life Annuities in Parishes for the Comfort of the Poor," upon a contributory basis, and his scheme is very similar to that put forward by Mr Chamberlain some years ago, so we see that there is nothing new even about Old Age Pensions.

Lord Kames, the Scottish judge, published his "Sketches of the History of Man" in 1774, and in them deals with the Poor Law question. "If," he says, "it should be reported of some foreign nation that the burden of maintaining the idle and profligate is laid upon the frugal and industrious who work hard for a maintenance for themselves, what would we think of such a nation? Yet this is literally the case in England."

Only one more pamphlet remains to be noted, and that because it takes a different view of the causes of the increase of the poor from all the other writers cited. It is entitled "An Investigation of Mr Pitt's Speech," and was written by a Mr Howlett and published about 1796. Mr Howlett denies that the Poor Laws have had the effect attributed to them. He quotes the old song :

"Hang sorrow, cast away care,
The parish is bound to maintain us,"

in order to contend that no one but "a sot in his cups" would be influenced by such motives. The

increase of the poor he attributes partly to the increase in the price of provisions and partly to—the growth of Methodism. Sir F. Eden's comment upon Mr Howlett's views is as follows:—"The real case, however, is that in every part of England, I had almost said in every parish, instances may be found of persons preferring a pension from the parish and a life of idleness to hard work and good wages."

Towards the end of the eighteenth century the value of Friendly Societies began first to be appreciated. In 1784 Mr Acland published a scheme for partly compulsory insurance through Friendly Societies, or "Box Clubs" as they were then called. Sir F. Eden devotes a special chapter to this subject of Friendly Societies, whose object he defines to be "that by an association of the many the few may be assisted, and to promote the most laudable of charities—that of securing to the industrious, from the surplus or part of the surplus of their savings, an equivalent reserve during their incapacity to labour." Sir F. Eden's approval of Friendly Societies has found abundant justification in the history of the nineteenth century. All experience shows that it is comparatively rare for members of a Friendly Society to apply for relief to the parish. He says, "Whether Friendly Societies will eventually contribute to reduce the poor rate the limited extent of my enquiries does not allow me peremptorily to decide. That, however, these institutions increase the comfort of the labouring classes who belong to them will be evident by comparing the condition of those who are members of them and those in the same parish who are contented to rely upon the parish for relief. The former are in general cleanly, orderly, and sober, and consequently good and happy members of society, while the latter live

in filth and wretchedness, and are often by the pressure of casual sickness or accident, which incapacitates them from working, tempted to the commission of improper acts, not to say crimes, against which the sure resource of a Benefit Club would have been the best preservation." These words are as literally true to-day as when they were written. Any visitor amongst the poor can judge of this for himself. The member of a permanent Friendly Society—though not, perhaps, of a sharing-out club—is altogether on a higher plane, and has taken the first step upwards out of the crowd.

In 1782 a measure was passed which had momentous consequences and contributed more than anything else to bring matters to a head. It has already been pointed out that in various parts of England and at various times, but especially towards the end of the seventeenth century, the utility of what is now known as the workhouse test as a restraint upon pauperism had been proved by experience. In the early years of George I. an Act was passed sanctioning the unconditional offer of admission to the poorhouse—for as yet workhouses, as they are now understood, were few and far between. By 1782 the pendulum had swung in the opposite direction, and the Act passed in that year, usually known as Gilbert's Act, provided that no one should be sent to a workhouse who was physically capable of labour. That Act may be looked upon as the removal of the last barrier against the onrush of pauperism. From that time forwards the pace became fast and furious. The rates, which in 1785 were £1,912,000 per annum rose in 1817 to £7,870,891. Statistics of pauperism there were none except such as can be extracted from old parish books which were often ill-kept, but there

can be no doubt that at least in the south and west of England nearly the whole agricultural population was on the rates. Land was fast going out of cultivation because it no longer paid to work it. The misery of the poor became more and more intense, as anyone who reads the history of the time, such as the writings of Arthur Young, William Cobbett, or Harriet Martineau, can see for themselves. At last, in 1832, the Royal Commission was appointed whose Report was the basis of the new Poor Law. The Commissioners, at least, were quite clear in their views as to the causes of the evil. The poor rate, they say, had up to that time "been applied to purposes opposed to the letter and still more to the spirit of the Elizabethan Poor Law and destructive to the morals of the most numerous class and the welfare of all." All incentives to industry and self-reliance had been removed by the fact that the working classes could claim as a right to be supported at their homes out of the rates. "The aim of the old Poor Law had been to attempt to repeal *pro tanto* that law of nature by which the effects of a man's improvidence or misconduct are borne by himself and his family. The result of that attempt had been to repeal *pro tanto* the law by which each man and his family enjoy the benefit of his prudence and exertion. In abolishing punishment we abolish reward." The principles laid down by the Commissioners as essential to a proper administration of public relief are :—

(a) That the position of the pauper should be less eligible than that of the lowest class of independent labourer who has to bear the charges.

(b) That the functions of State relief should be limited to the relief of destitution, such destitution

to be tested by the willingness to enter a workhouse or institution.

(c) That remedial relief, as opposed to the relief of destitution, should be left to voluntary charity.

The above is a rough sketch of some of the literature dealing with Poor Law questions between 1602 and 1834. Much has been omitted, and especially that which deals with the period immediately preceding the Act of 1834. For the conditions of that time, we must refer to the Report of the Commissioners itself, concerning which it is of the utmost importance that every one should inform himself. The literature of the earlier period is not so well known or so easily attainable. Nevertheless, it is of great importance to any one who will follow the evolution of the subject, and will apply it as a test to many questions which are now before the public. Scrappy and disjointed as it is, there is yet a thread running through it, which, if rightly followed, will give the clue to the way out of many difficulties. There are several points which especially call for attention. The first and most important is that of the effect of relief upon character, an effect which is as potent to-day as it was a hundred years ago, as it has been through all history. Next, we must observe the gradually growing conviction that in all public relief there must be an element of deterrence, and some check or test as an alternative to a general pauperism. It was long before even this much was understood; it was longer before reformers hit upon the solution of what is now known as the "workhouse test," of which Mr Cary at Bristol was the first important exponent. The principle was decisively adopted by legislation of George I., and as decisively rejected by legislation of George III.

It was finally adopted by the Commission of 1834, and remains the underlying principle of the English Poor Law. The principle more fully stated is as follows, viz., that, whereas nature ordains that a man must either support himself or starve, no civilised community can, for its own sake and credit, allow such an extremity of hardship. On the contrary, all will agree that the necessities of life must be provided for every one who is in need of them; but that they must, so far as the State is concerned, be given upon terms, and the terms hitherto accepted as the basis of our Poor Law have been the conditions laid down by the Commission of 1834. There must be devised somehow an element of deterrence in public relief, and the Poor Law must be, as the Commissioners put it, "centrifugal, not centripetal." We had 200 years of a centripetal Poor Law, with results which may be summed up in a sentence, "ruin to the poor, ruin to the country." Another point of some importance which stands out from a study of these pamphlets is that, for almost 200 years, every writer except Daniel Defoe, and perhaps Sir F. Eden, seems to have believed, in spite of constant failure, in the possibility of making artificial work. The belief in its possibility is apparently as strong as ever at the present moment. All the best wits of nearly three centuries have applied their minds to the problem, but no one hitherto has been able to supply a solution. The authors of the Unemployed Workmen's Act are in no better plight. All the old difficulties are recurring; all the old fallacies are being put forward as new ideas; many of the old failures are being renewed under the guise of "experiments," and all the old arguments on either side repeated almost *ad nauseam*. After the lapse of yet another century, we may once more recall the words of Sir F. Eden, "that it will at least

afford satisfaction to the many patriotic but unsuccessful philanthropists who have attempted to repair this portion of the legislative fabric, that even so great a man as John Locke attempted it with but little success."

SOME EARLY HISTORY OF POOR RELIEF IN PARIS.¹

A BOOK has just appeared containing an account of the evolution of poor relief in Paris, which is of great interest to students. It is only brought up to 1850. "Later events are still too near to us to be judged impartially."

The history of poor relief in a city which has in a hundred years passed through four revolutions and has thrice been occupied by a foreign army, is necessarily somewhat abnormal. Still we can trace in it many features which are common to the question in almost all countries at all ages. We see economic laws, set at defiance, again asserting themselves and then again gradually losing their force. We see a constant struggle between antagonistic theories of poor relief and repeated attempts to carry out the creed of the *droits de l'homme*. We see these attempts as often defeated by the logic of circumstances and a return to the principle of voluntarism, which has in fact remained the underlying principle of French poor relief. The difficulties of the position have been intensified again and again by the misery caused by revolutions, sieges, and occupations, and consequent paralysis of trade and commerce. The study of the question has

¹ "Simples notes sur l'organisation des secours publics à Paris," par Albert Mauger, ancien archiviste de l'assistance publique. Paris : H. Didier.

been complicated by gaps in the records caused by internal disorders such as the pillage of the Arch-evêché in 1830, and the burning of State papers during the Commune of 1871.

The history divides itself roughly into two periods—that prior to the great revolution and that subsequent to it. Both are of the greatest interest to modern students.

In France, as in England, in early days the relief of the poor was in the hands of the Church. The earliest foundation was that of the Hôtel Dieu, whose duty it was “ouvrir ses bras comme ceux de la Providence à quiconque frappait à sa porte.” But soon the struggle began between clergy and laity; as far back as 1559 there were loud complaints of the “mauvais traitements que font les religieuses, prieures et sous-prieures, aux pauvres malades y affluant tellement qu’à raison de ce (*sic*) plusieurs malades ne veulent pas aller au dit Hôtel Dieu, ce qui est un grand scandale,” and a petition to the King and Parliament prayed for a reduction of the “great and excessive expense of the institution,” and complained of the “presence in the halls of pretended convalescents, irregular officials who are a useless expense to the house, and for whom are reserved the wines and delicacies which ought to go to those who are most grievously ill.” Moreover, the duties of the hospital nun do not consist in “endless services and reunions of the community,” but should be “at the pillow of the sick poor and not in the chapel and refectory.” The constant feasting of those charged with these duties became a byword, and earned for them the name of the “Confrérie des goulous”—of so early a date is the association of poor relief with feasting! In one direction at least the community appear to have been successful—though they received all without distinction of faith, “no Jew or heretic ever died there without abjuring

his errors. Thus visibly does Heaven bless so holy a house."

In 1566 the Grand Bureau des Pauvres was formed at the Council of Paris. Under it the infirm poor were placed at the charge of their parish, and in 1616 we find the indigents of the Grand Bureau wearing a red and yellow cross on their shoulder, as later in England in the reign of William III. The Grand Bureau distributed "*pain d'aumône*" on Sunday after mass. In 1640, however, we hear of "*prodigious disorders*," and some "*private individuals of great virtue* were touched at the deplorable state of the souls of these poor unhappy Christians: as for their bodies, however afflicted they appeared, they were not real objects of compassion, as they found in the alms of the people more than was sufficient for their wants and even for their debauches; but their souls, plunged in total ignorance of religion and in extreme corruption of morals, gave the utmost grief to persons animated with zeal for their salvation." These conditions led to the foundation of the Hôpital Général by Louis XIV., composed of the Pitié, Bicêtre, Scipion, the Salpêtrière, and others. The edict under which it was founded, after reciting the "*libertinage*" of the beggars of the city, forbids begging under the severest penalties, and orders the "*renfermement*" of the poor unable to support themselves. It was announced from the pulpit, in all the parishes, that the Hôpital Général would be open on 7th May 1657, for the poor who wished to enter it of their own will, and the magistrates, by public crier, forbade people to ask for alms in Paris. On the 14th "*l'enfermement des pauvres fut accompli sans aucune émotion*." As the result "*all Paris on that day changed its face: the greater part of the beggars withdrew to the provinces, the wiser began to think of earning their living without begging, and the*

more infirm entered the institutions of their own accord," a result which recalls the effects of the workhouse test under the new Poor Law.

From quite early times there were various institutions for children, but the orphanages were small and in the main reserved for legitimate children. It fell to St Vincent de Paul, Curé of Clichy de Varenne, to establish the work of the *enfants trouvés* through the churches. The scallop shells still to be seen at the doors of many churches, now used as holy water holders, were originally intended for the reception of children abandoned by their parents. No questions were asked—"enquêtes préalables qui poussaient à l'infanticide." There was only one requirement—"la misère et l'abandon." In 1641 there were 220 of these deserted children, in 1772 there were 7680. Then came a temporary reaction. At that time, "l'hospice vit arriver à sa porte dans les coches d'eau et dans les coches de terre un grand nombre d'enfants de la banlieue et de la province qui denués d'allaitement souvent depuis plus d'une journée mouraient sans reprendre de forces." Accordingly, there were repeated decrees forbidding coachmen and wagoners from bringing new-born children into the town. The well-known "tour" or turning-box, from 1826 to 1859, was a later development of the work of the *enfants trouvés*. The maximum number received by it was 3200 in 1838. Since then, the system of admission "à bureau ouvert," under which the mother reveals her identity and "secours pour prévenir l'abandon" is granted, has been the ordinary method of dealing with the question. The number of deserted children in Paris is still enormous. The usual method of dealing with them has been, from quite early times, to board them out in the country. Here, again, it is interesting to see that many of the difficulties which beset boarding out in this country have

manifested themselves abroad. The character of those who took these children were often more than doubtful—"many of the children died, and those who survived went out to beg with their foster-parents as soon as they could walk." The problem of restoring to the country a town-bred population has, says M. Mauger, met with a "*succès très relatif*."

Some of the children were maintained in orphanages inside Paris, and of them we read that they were frequently "hired out to attend funerals."

The organisation of the hospitals in the pre-revolutionary period, and even later, was extremely defective. In the old Hôtel Dieu, as many as sixteen patients slept in a bed, the bed itself being an enormous wooden structure, frequently a "two-decker." All sorts of diseases were mixed together: sanitation was a minus quantity. Even in these days, however, there were some which showed signs of better things. The Hôpital de Charité, for instance, was infinitely better than the Hôtel Dieu. But, generally speaking, the conditions were indescribably bad. Treatment was in some cases disciplinary. Those whose diseases were due to their own misconduct were subjected to treatment of which "*le premier soin était le supplice humiliant de flagellation*." Our infirmaries and public hospitals at the present time are full of patients whose diseases are due to drink and other forms of vice, and perhaps disciplinary treatment of some kind might be desirable in such cases, though possibly not in the form of "flagellation." The grievance of the ratepayers is a serious one.

We now come to the second period—the period of the Revolution and after. The Convention formed a Comité de Mendicité which had but a brief existence. "Its ideas, its reports, were directed to a project for the organisation of national

relief prescribed by the 'Rights of Man,' one which was never realised . . . its extravagant aims were in the past, and still remain, the greatest obstacle to practical solutions."

At the time of the Revolution there were forty-eight hospitals and hospices in Paris. The National Assembly declared them all public property in 1793 and took over their administration. An Administrative Commission of seven members was formed in the same year. In the following three years the *personnel* was changed twenty-two times. The rapid succession of events rendered their work barren. Depression of paper money, stoppage of trade, deprivation of property, and loss of confidence, the consequence of compulsory alienation, rendered direct administration impossible, and finally the work was handed over to "greedy contractors."

The first administrators under the Revolution directed their attention to the centralisation and consolidation of the various foundations. M. Mauger emphatically approves this part of their work. The only grave fault, he says, that we can ascribe to them is the "revival of the 'ateliers de charité' which, created in the reigns of Francis I. and Henry II., had produced detestable results." After a few months, public beneficence had to support "43,000 individuals always discontented with their lot, always ready to disturb the public peace. After having made them carry out all the work possible in Paris—the demolition of the Bastille, repair of the roads, cleaning of the Seine and its banks, digging of the St Martin Canal, etc.—they were obliged to look out for other work for them. . . . They thought of the digging of canals, the cultivation of certain barren cantons of the centre and the west, but the workmen left the yards and the terror in Paris only increased." The

experience gained at that time, however, did not prevent the formation of the "ateliers nationaux" in 1848. And we in England are passing through a similar crisis. At the end of the great Revolution, the only remaining public forms of "assistance par travail" were the "filature des indigents" for women and the Maison de Scipion for the making of bread—both upon a very small scale and of doubtful efficiency.

The Convention proclaimed the abolition of private charity and individual almsgiving, but having done so they had nothing to give in its place. "Solidarité humaine" proved a sorry substitute. The Government itself was almost bankrupt owing to the destruction of public confidence.

Meanwhile "the benevolent were robbed of the dream of their life," that, namely, of helping their fellow-creatures. "The poor lost their resource in time of trouble, and men of sensibility the means of satisfying their moral consciousness."

The creation of the Central Commission of "Bienfaisance" was the one work of these early administrators destined to last, and was the foundation of the present system of outdoor relief in Paris. The struggle between the theory of State *v.* voluntary charity reappears in the word "bienfaisance," which was substituted for the older "charité," a word odious to the disciples of Rousseau. The swing of the pendulum came in 1816 when the "bureaux de bienfaisance" became once more "bureaux de charité" for a brief period. In 1801 the Conseil-Général des Hospices was founded at the instance of the then Préfet of the Seine; its first members were men of great distinction, and the reorganisation of the various institutions was for the first time placed upon a firm basis.

M. Duquesnoy, a member of the Conseil,

furnishes a valuable report upon "secours à domicile." The needs of the indigent class, he says, are, "first and foremost, education, primary, moral, religious, and technical; secondly, work; thirdly, relief . . . but mendicity must be repressed, and even if that is not the duty of 'bienfaisance,' it has a corresponding duty not to encourage the evil by refusing relief; but to multiply relief without discrimination is to increase the class of the poor. Almsgiving is rarely beneficial, for whoever has two arms and does not work, does not give back to society that which he receives from her, and is guilty if he has not put forth all his efforts to avoid the necessity for begging. One must force the professional beggar to work and help others to get situations; one must encourage those who earn more than their needs to lay by for old age, and he pleads with all earnestness for the creation of a 'Caisse d'Epargne et de Prévoyance.'" We find that at that time there were already trades unions in Paris with sick benefit, the germ of the modern French friendly societies. The pauperism of Paris, however, appears to have been enormous. Statistics taken at the time of the report of Duquesnoy (1793) show a mean number of 116,000 paupers in a population of 547,000. The means of diminishing the excessive number of the indigent population would be, he considered, to turn the Mont de Piété into a savings bank. To show under one direction the advantages of saving and the heavy charges which overwhelm those who have not known how to economise would be for the working class a means of moral education of certain effect.

M. Pastoret's report of a little later date, cited by M. Mauger, deals seriatim with the public institutions of Paris, showing the enormous reforms that were made immediately after the Revolution. He ends his report upon the Salpêtrière, the

principal lunatic asylum, with a curious though irrelevant observation. "The great majority of the cases of madness are due to neurotic causes, and the violent cerebral excitement which followed the Revolution has had opposite effects in the different sexes. While the men were haunted with aristocratic ideas, the women showed exaggerated aspirations towards democracy and absolute equality." There was, according to the same report, a remarkable decline in the income of charitable foundations between 1807 and 1813. "At that time the recollection was still bitter of the measures by which the Revolution, making no distinction between the foundations, had applied them to purposes different from those strictly laid down by the founders. . . . The law of 3rd May 1803, submitting all donations to the approbation of the Government, had not calmed this uneasiness, and the decree of November 1813 had confirmed charitable donors in their mistrust."

The next report cited is that of M. Camet de la Bonnardière, who deals with the period following the retreat from Moscow and the occupation of Paris. He draws a hideous picture of the sufferings of the troops during the retreat on the capital, and of the unpreparedness of the military administration. Once again, private charity came to the rescue, whilst the Government remained powerless. "*Les caisses étaient vides et l'administration ne jouissait d'aucun crédit.*" The voluntary generosity of private citizens provided 6000 hospital beds shared alike by French soldiers and wounded prisoners of the enemy. Then followed the invasion and occupation of Paris and the requisitions of the allies. The population of the extemporised hospitals was 31,000. The administration entirely broke down, and "*les besoins qui se manifestaient chaque jour n'auraient pas été satisfaits sans l'inépuisable bien-*

faisance des habitants." Next came the "Hundred Days" and the second invasion. "Blucher, carried away by blind hatred, pursued without mercy the wreck of the Grande Armée, forgetting that an act of energy by a body of 60,000 men collected at Laon might have turned his victory into disaster, whilst Wellington, prudent and methodical, advanced by short marches and invested Paris ten days after the defeat of Waterloo."

After that we hear of the requisitions for the troops sternly enforced by the English commander-in-chief in spite of the protests of the Municipal Council. "The Duke of Wellington, cold and authoritative by nature, admitted no obstacle, permitted no objection. The long resistance that he had met with at Torres Vedras and the wonderful retreat of the army of Spain, far from inspiring him with sentiments of respect and pity for an unhappy adversary, had developed in him, on the contrary, a spirit of narrow nationality which takes pleasure in crushing a defenceless foe."

M. Mauger writes with admirable precision and clearness, and his researches must have involved enormous labour. The book is professedly historical, and M. Mauger disclaims repeatedly the intention of discussing opposing theories. Still, in places, he indicates very clearly his own opinions of the revolutionary theory which would abolish private charity—he says: "Nous n'en avons pas à discuter, nous n'avons que l'exposer." Nationalisation of charitable enterprises "leur enlève leur dernier espoir." He evidently has a leaning towards "assistance par travail." He points out the failure of all endeavours in that direction in Paris, but attributes the failure to "trop grande extension." He holds up for imitation what has been done in England and Germany "under colder skies by more methodical wits." But M. Mauger can hardly

have informed himself sufficiently of the real conditions in either of these countries.

The foregoing is only a meagre sketch of the contents of a volume of some 400 pages. Those who wish to go further into the matter are recommended to read it themselves. It is full of lessons which are as cogent to-day as they ever were.

POOR RELIEF IN A WEST COUNTRY VILLAGE, 1786-1906

A STUDY AND A CONTRAST

THE Poor Law is in the melting-pot. Experts, of widely divergent views, are struggling for the handle of the ladle, and no one can guess what will come out. Meanwhile the volume of articles, pamphlets, and disquisitions of all sorts upon social subjects is growing at a prodigious rate, and there is some danger lest, in the clash of opinions, we should lose sight of plain facts. The ordinary man, with whom the decision must ultimately rest, is inclined to be weary of the conflict of authorities, and to say: "Who will show us any good?" The need of the moment would appear to be to escape from the tangle of conflicting sociology and economics by which the whole matter is overlaid, and to return to the simpler aspects of the question, which must be intelligible even to the "man in the street."

A study of the question in a single village, where the issues are simple and direct, and the facts concrete and clear, would appear to meet this need to some extent. And it is with that object that the following short sketch has been traced and put together.

The village in question is situated in a purely rural district in the West Country, and contained a population of about 800 at the end of the eighteenth century. The earliest poor-book still extant dates

from 1786, four years after the passing of Gilbert's Act, under which outdoor relief was made obligatory. The parish year seems to have begun variously—perhaps at the discretion of the overseers—in April, May, or June, and the “first month” is always one of those three months. The accounts of poor relief are kept monthly, under the headings “monthly payments” and “extraordinaries.” The former are regular allowances of outdoor relief, continued over long periods, in some cases apparently indefinitely. The latter are what we should now know as casual relief, and take the shape of various articles of clothing, coals, blankets, attendance in sickness, etc.

The “first month's pay” for (May) 1786, shows thirty-three monthly allowances ranging from 16s. to 4s., total £10, 15s. The first month's “extraordinaries” number twenty-seven, and amount to £4 or thereabouts. The maximum total monthly expenditure under these two heads during that year was £22, and the minimum £15. The total “disbursed” (*sic*) in poor relief for the year was about £200. Amongst the monthly allowances we find five evidently in respect of bastardy cases. Forty rates were made at £5, os. 6d. per rate.

Nine years later—that is to say, in the “first month” of 1805—the monthly payments had risen to eighty-six, and the “extraordinaries” to fifty-eight, and the total amount paid for the relief of the poor was £48, 16s. 8d. By this time the practice of giving “shirts,” “shifts,” and other articles of clothing, which hardly appear at all in the earlier record, had grown to enormous dimensions. That of paying people to attend upon their relations in sickness and old age had also assumed formidable proportions, and there is scarcely a month in which it does not appear in some form. There are some six allowances in respect of bastard children. We shall see later that there was a

further increase in this respect. In this year there is a separate account in respect of eighteen allowances "paid to Volunteers' wives and familys" (*sic*). The annual expenditure by this time amounted to about £600.

By 1815 the "first month's" expenditure had risen to about £65. There is a curious entry here, "Cash to R. H.'s family previous to their departure to New South Wales," the father having probably been transported.

In 1832 the poor-books come to an end. The total monthly expenditure for the first month, 1831-32, is £90 in respect of seventy "allowances" and fifty-seven "extraordinaries," and the total expenditure for the year £996. Forty-two rates were made at £23, 13s. 3½d. as against forty rates at £5, os. 6d. in 1786.

There are a few other items scattered about in the old books which have some interest for various reasons. In 1805 the parish had to pay a fine of £10, 18s. 6d. "for not providing a man for the army of reserve"—a severe penalty, indicating the tension of the times. Bastardy was increasing fast, and reached a maximum of nine allowances in a single month in 1829, and throughout there is a constant record of attempts to enforce maintenance upon putative fathers by attendance at sessions and elsewhere. Upon one occasion, £13 is paid "for a journey to Yorkshire to apprehend Francis Cotton on account of bastardy." We may doubt whether the journey repaid its expenses. Quaint expressions, the meaning of which is obscure to the writer, occur from time to time. Thus, very frequently, A. B. or C. D. "towards a turn." Perhaps some reader may be able to explain this. Some of the names appear upon the books almost from the cradle to the grave. Thus, one "Phebe Hains" appears about 1787, as "in distress, 1 shilling"; six

years later comes the significant entry, "Phebe Hains and child"; after that the name appears continuously upon the books till 1832, when we take leave of poor Phebe Hains, still in the receipt of a monthly payment of 10s. "Melliar Helliard" is on the books in 1786, and still in 1815, and there are many cases of the sort. The same names go on from month to month, and from year to year, till we come to the last phase: "A. B. paid for coffin and shroud, digging grave and bell." Of the "unemployed" we read again and again: "A. B. work upon the roads"; "C. D., no work, 2s.; ditto a sheet." Of tramps, memoranda such as "poor woman in distress with four children," "seamen in distress," "poor man with a pass"; and 6d. is the usual maximum of relief given.

There were two poorhouses in the parish, and numerous entries in respect to them for "thatching," mending windows (possibly broken by discontented inmates). £19, 10s. 6d. is paid to the principal landlord half-yearly "as usual" for cottages occupied by paupers, and a considerable amount to other owners for the same purpose.

To sum up, then, the expenditure upon poor relief had risen in forty-five years from £200 a year to £995, and was still rising. The monthly list of allowances and extraordinaries had grown from 60 to 127. Such were the conditions up to the passing of the new Poor Law. Relief was given for babies and children and for the sick; work and relief were given to the able-bodied; a system of practically universal pensions was in force for the aged.

And now we may compare these conditions with those of the present day. There has been little alteration in the external conditions of the village, except that the population has, like that of most rural villages, declined by about 25 per cent. The

same families own the land. The same family, till recently, held the incumbency. The same names appear, almost without exception, amongst the farmers and labourers. There are still a few living who were born under the old Poor Law. There are many more who can remember well some of the old people whose names appear upon the parish books. The chief change in the external conditions is that the land, which was then largely agricultural, is now everywhere sown down to grass, and that the economic conditions in that respect would appear to be less favourable to the labourer than one hundred years ago.

What, then, are the present conditions in respect to poor relief? They may be stated in a sentence. The report of the Union for 1905-6 shows that during that time there were nine indoor and nine outdoor paupers for the whole year belonging to the village in question. If we estimate the cost of maintenance of indoor paupers at 5s. a week, the cost for them would be £117. The cost of the outdoor paupers was £52, and the total £169, as against £995 in 1831-2. The value of the change is not, however, to be measured by the reduction of the cost, but by the improvement in the condition of the people. Poor they still are, but there is little or no distress amongst them; and their poverty is as nothing compared with that of one hundred years ago. They are better fed, better clothed, and better housed, and many of them have something to spare for sick clubs. They seldom ask for any form of relief, and no one nowadays would dream of asking to be paid for attendance upon a sick relation. The prevailing spirit is entirely different from that of other days. Bastardy has practically disappeared. The village is no longer a village of paupers, but one of self-respecting citizens.

The conditions are not, of course, even now

ideal; wages are still much too low; the labourer is still too far divided from the land which he cultivates. But in both those directions something has been gained. Wages have certainly increased considerably within the memory of the writer. Practically every labourer has a garden attached to his cottage, and many have allotments. The lowness of wages is, to some extent, counterbalanced by the cheapness of cottage accommodation, and there is no doubt that this accommodation is immeasurably better than that of a hundred years ago. The labourer is no longer clothed, fed, and housed by the parish. He does all this for himself out of his wages, and the writer submits that this is the true line of social progress rather than the condonation of inadequate wages by poor relief under whatever name it be disguised. The history of poor relief in this village is identical with that in hundreds of English villages. What, then, is the cause of the change? Can there be any doubt that it is due to the cutting off, in 1834, of the endowment of pauperism? Every practical man knows that, even to-day, it would be easy to return to the old conditions. Average human nature is not proof against the common desire to live without labour, to its own eventual ruin, body and soul. The foregoing sketch has been made because the issues are simple, and the facts—at least to one who knows the village and the people—as vivid as if they happened yesterday. Let any one who will make a similar study with regard to his own village, and form his own conclusions.

NOTES FROM A WORKHOUSE EXAMINATION COMMITTEE

THE question of workhouse management has been very much to the fore of late years. We have had two circulars, at least, from the Upper Board upon the subject—one in January 1895, the other in July 1896. The first is general, and suggests various improvements in workhouse and infirmary, such as classification, improvements in nursing, and various details, such as the abolition of distinctive clothing and other minor relaxations. The second deals chiefly with the treatment of the aged and infirm, for whom it prescribes classification as especially important, and reiterates the suggestions made in the former circular as to leave of absence and non-distinctive clothing. The circulars are only a reflection of what had been taking place in many parts of London prior to their issue. Altogether, no doubt, the tendency of the last few years has been in the direction of greater indulgence for certain classes of the inmates of workhouses. With this, so long as it is rightly applied, no one will quarrel.

The Local Government Board in its second circular lays especial stress upon the importance of classification of the aged and infirm, and of separating those who have previously "led moral and respectable lives from those who, from their habits of speech, or for other reasons, are likely to cause them discomfort." It would be interesting

to know how far this classification has been carried out. We know, indeed, that a proper separation would involve the rebuilding of at least half the workhouses in London. Most of them are already overcrowded, and want of space prevents any modification of existing arrangements. But even supposing there were room, the difficulties of classification are not surmounted. As it was once put, "How are we to decide who shall be placed in the back row of the stalls, and who shall be in the front row of the pit?"

The Poor Law which divides those receiving relief into the able-bodied, the sick, the aged over sixty, and the young, rather naturally leads to the presumption that all those over sixty are to be treated alike. They are no longer "able-bodied." Relaxations of discipline and a more indulgent dietary scale is prescribed for them. If tobacco or snuff is given it is given to them, and they are selected for any treats or outings which may be available. Their clothing is to be non-distinctive. In short, the sixtieth birthday is a milestone: all those who have passed it, whatever the cause of their entering the workhouse, whatever their conduct whilst in it, can legally be treated by the Guardians with certain indulgences which are prohibited for those under that age. It will probably be found that the practice of most Boards of Guardians follows the presumption of the law, and that those past sixty are in the main treated alike.

The importance of considering this question is obvious when we remember that the vast majority of the inmates of workhouses, both in London and country, are above the age of sixty, and that the overcrowding of our workhouses is chiefly due to the influx of this class of the poor. Are we to treat them all alike as a privileged

class? That there are many very decent old people, both men and women, in our workhouses, no one would deny; and though there can be no doubt that many even of them need not have been there if they had thought more of old age when they were young, yet now that they are there no one would be disposed to treat them harshly or to grudge them the little indulgences that the law allows. On the other hand, any one who has had any lengthened experience of the matter, knows that inmates over sixty differ just as much, both morally and physically, as those under sixty.

One point that will strike any one who has any experience of the subject, is, that many people who have passed the age-limit are physically much more capable than others many years their juniors. A typical case is that of an old man of seventy-four who is, or was till quite recently, an inmate of a London workhouse. He is as hale and hearty a man as any one could wish to see. He has married a wife about forty years younger than himself, and has occupied his "declining" years in begetting a family of five or six young children, the eldest of whom cannot even now be much more than ten years old. The Guardians have kept his children almost continuously for several years, and himself and his wife intermittently. He has always pleaded that he is unable to find work on account of his age, and he has been constantly given passes "to look for work" for this reason. His wife also took her discharge from time to time, and only a few months ago returned to the workhouse prepared to present the Guardians with another "Poor Law child." Subsequent inquiries have shown that upon at least one occasion when he was out on pass, and was representing to the Guardians that he was

unable to get work, he was actually at work, and earning over £1 a week. His employer spoke of him as a strong, active man, and a good workman.

Another man, just over sixty—also strong and hearty—was let out repeatedly on pass to look for work. His want of success led to inquiries being made, and it was reported that he never prosecuted his researches further than “The Well and Bucket.”

Another old man, charged with coming in drunk, confesses his failings, but excuses them on eugenic grounds. “Sometimes,” he says, “I think it’s hereditary. My poor dear mother suffered from it badly, and I am her only boy.” Possibly those who believe that we are not responsible for our actions, but are the creatures of circumstance, may be able to make some use of this.

Another typical case is that of an old pensioner. He has been in and out of the workhouse for years. He goes out regularly about quarter day and has a debauch, and then returns to the workhouse. His pension is one which is not attachable.

It would not be difficult to show that on the women’s side as well as on the men’s side the distinctions are equally wide. The woman who has led a drunken, disreputable life, and has passed the age of sixty, is unhappily no uncommon phenomenon in London workhouses. One such, known to the writer, has also had two daughters in the workhouse, both of whom had come in with illegitimate children.

Again, it is well known that a very large number of the old people—both men and women—return from their weekly leave of absence the worse for drink; also that many of them are by no means too refined in their language. It must necessarily be a considerable hardship to those

who are decent and respectable to be mixed up with these rougher elements. Miss Twining quotes a case in which a blind man in a London workhouse was forced to go to bed at six, in order to get away from the foul language used in the day-room. Altogether, everything points to the necessity of some differentiation of treatment, as suggested by the Local Government Board, between those aged inmates of our workhouses who are decent and respectable and those who are not. The notion that to be over sixty confers of itself a halo of respectability is a dangerous fallacy. If metropolitan workhouses are not to be swamped with those who have been and are still leading dissipated and disreputable lives, greater stringency will have to be adopted in respect to them, both as a matter of public policy and in fairness to the more decent inmates. A fair percentage at least of those who frequent our workhouses need not be there at all if they behaved themselves even moderately well outside. We must all of us know cases, for instance, in which children would have kept their parents away from the workhouse altogether but for their intolerable and continued misbehaviour.

The difficulties of classification are, as already pointed out, considerable. But we can, at all events, refrain from encouraging impenitent old age by gifts of tobacco, snuff, and sweets, by unlimited liberty to come and go, and by dressing it up in clothes which are sometimes better than those of the respectable tradesman outside. It is not at all necessary to go into people's past lives. The line of demarcation between those who behave themselves decently and respectably and those who do not, is quite sufficiently defined, and no good workhouse master, if he has the support of his Board, will find much difficulty in doing justice, broadly speaking.

And now we come to another class of inmates, and by no means the least important one, namely the able-bodied adults. The typical able-bodied "in-and-out" is usually a happy-go-lucky, devil-may-care sort of fellow, whose chief characteristic is that he is totally devoid of any wish to maintain himself. He can often work, and work well by fits and starts; but he has come to look upon the workhouse or the casual ward as his home, and when he has once got that idea into his head it is extremely difficult to get it out again.

One such, a young fellow of about thirty, has been in and out of the workhouse since he was fourteen. He is short and thick-set, strong and well-made, not bad-looking, with dark curly hair. He has all his wits about him, and if there had been no Poor Law would, undoubtedly, have been earning his own living. Several times he has disappeared for a short time, and it has been reported that he is at work. He has, however, invariably turned up again, stating upon almost every occasion that he has had "an accident" which has obliged him to throw up his work. He is by turns threatened, cajoled, lectured, and prosecuted, but all in vain. He takes it all quite good-humouredly. When last remonstrated with he mildly remarked that "he had not been in and out so *wonderful* many times."

Another was always in and out "because of his leg." It was quite true that he had a sore place on his leg, but the medical officer, who knew him of old, hinted that that sore place was as good as an old-age pension to him, and that it was not very likely that he would allow it to heal. He was otherwise an able-bodied, healthy man.

Another strong, active young man who "could not get work," was passing his time in a flirtation with one of the ladies on the other side of the

House. An intercepted letter, which ran as follows, was one day laid before the Guardians :—

“Dear liz lizey I am going out on Monday. If you like you can come with me. I shall wait for you at the prince of wails. yrs. truly, Bill.”

Flirtations of this kind are by no means uncommon in workhouse life. Probably every workhouse has its in-and-out couple who have originally been “married by the chaplain of the workhouse.” Sometimes even the aged succumb. Two old men have taken to themselves wives from amongst the female inmates. In neither case, unfortunately, have the marriages turned out happily. “She isn’t at all the sort of woman I expected,” said one of them plaintively; “she drinks a bit.”

The allowance of “extra diet to helpers” is a difficult question. It is probably not uncommon in London workhouses, and doubtless counts as one of the attractions to the able-bodied. At first sight it would appear that if a man or woman can work inside a workhouse they can work outside, and that they would be better outside. If, however, they prefer to remain in, then they should work for their keep. In neither case is it good either for them or for the ratepayers to bribe them to stay. It is assumed, of course, that the workhouse has a proper and sufficient dietary scale.

There are some who think that the able-bodied day-room, both on the men’s side and on the women’s, has its charms for a certain class of inmate. They are said to be scenes of a certain rough conviviality, not always of too lofty a tone, which is dear to the heart of the able-bodied in-and-out. The supervision is often not very stringent, and one has heard of such things as card-playing, chuck-penny, and other similar amusements being

carried on there *sub rosa*. One Board of Guardians at least has interfered with such amusements by appointing "mental instructors," whose business it is to spend a certain time in the day-rooms, and to endeavour to influence their inhabitants in the right direction.

The question of the able-bodied inmate has been much discussed during the last few years. We have heard much of "paupers' paradises" and the like, which shows which way the wind blows though the particular Board gibbeted is often no worse than its neighbours.

In illustration of the attractiveness of the workhouse for able-bodied women, two stories may be quoted, both quite authentic, from the same workhouse. In both cases situations had been found for the women by the matron or otherwise. In the first case, the inmate in question consented to go to the situation, but represented that she must be back at the workhouse in time for the "Christmas entertainment." In the other case, that of a girl with an illegitimate child, she went to the situation, but soon came back to the workhouse, as she said that the work was not so hard there, and the hours were shorter. Moreover, in private service she had to get her own breakfast.

The following lines, accompanied by a cartoon, were sent to the writer by an inmate who had evidently been studying this question:—

"I'm the able-bodied Fee-Foh-Fum—
From the warm workhouse ward I come;
And whether they can or cannot pay,
I swallow ratepayers every day."

There are a few other points in connection with workhouse management. The first is whether it is wise to give clothes to those who are leaving the workhouse. Of course there are times when it is necessary to do this. The inmates' own clothes may have been

lost or destroyed, or a friendless man may be discharged from the infirmary, and the doctor may certify that his own clothing is insufficient to keep him warm. Or it may be a case in which a girl or young woman is to be sent to service. If it were certain that nothing but the want of a coat or a pair of boots stood between an able-bodied man and his chances of work, we should all get them for him somehow. If the matter rested there, and were confined to such cases, it would hardly be necessary to allude to the subject. In some workhouses, however, the giving away of clothes has attained very considerable proportions, as is evident from the fact that the Local Government Board has issued a special minute upon the subject. A gentleman of great experience said a few days ago, in reply to the question: "Does your Board give away clothes?"—"Of course it does. Often a man who comes before it says, 'If you will give me a pair of boots I will tramp away, and you shall never hear of me again,' and my Board think that the cheapest thing to do is to give him a pair of boots."

When there is a Workhouse Examination Committee the periodical appearance before the Committee begins in time to be recognised as the opportunity for the application of something, usually clothing or passes to look for work. These may have been granted, in the first instance, in perfectly legitimate cases, such as those above specified; but when you have a Committee which is known to grant such things, and it soon becomes known, applications multiply at an astounding rate. We thus have, on the one side, a sympathetic committee—committees are always sympathetic; on the other, an applicant who says that he could get work, or at least would free the ratepayers from the burden of keeping him, if he had, let us say, a

pair of boots. The difficulty of testing his statement is insuperable. There can only be one result—he gets the boots. In this manner the granting both of clothes and passes soon assumes very large proportions. That this in some cases—it may possibly be in very few cases—constitutes an “attraction” of the workhouse, is clear from the following authentic dialogues :—

A young and lusty tramp appears before the Committee.

Chairman.—“Well, what brings you in here?”

Tramp.—“A pair of boots.”

A well-known character who has been passed to another Union turns up again.

Chairman.—“What! *You* here again? You know you have rendered yourself liable to prosecution. I should like to know what you have to say for yourself.”

Well-known Character.—“Well, I hadn’t got no trousers to go out in: that partly brought me in.”

Another habitué does not even wait to be questioned, but begins at once—“I came in for a pair of trousers this time.”

The wholesale giving away of clothes has long since been abandoned in the workhouse in question.

There are many reasons why a Committee of Examination soon becomes popular, in spite of the fact that a great number of those who come before it receive “severe reprimands” from the chairman. Severe reprimands, however, when repeated possibly for the twentieth time to the same inmate, are apt to lose their force, and even a chairman’s resources of language are not inexhaustible. Meanwhile, there are many who appear to delight in their weekly appearance before the Guardians. Some desire to give them a bit of their mind. “If it wasn’t for the likes of us, I should like to know where the likes of you would be?” said a promis-

ing youth of nineteen to the chairman one day. The question still remains unanswered.

Another handed in one day, with a low bow, a copy of verses dedicated to the Committee. It began :—

“ Who are the powers at ——
 Whose conduct's base and low and mean ?—
 Our Guardians.

Who try to crush the very poor ?
 Who every honest man ignore ?—
 Our Guardians.

Whose heads are empty as a bladder ?
 Who couldn't if they tried be madder ?—
 Our Guardians.

Whose ways are base and dark and mean ?
 Who do their work with hands unclean ?—
 Our Guardians.

Who honest ways do not approve,
 Who others' goods with care remove ?—
 Our Guardians.

Whose wicked ways we will not tell,
 Who when they die will go to ——
 Our Guardians.”

There had been some difference of opinion with him as to his settlement, which it took nearly two years to ascertain—hence his animus. He was passed to his parish and now some other Board has its laureate. Even if the inmates had nothing to complain of, they liked to have a chat. It was said also that they liked coming before the Committee because they got an extra shave that day.

The dietary scales of different London work-houses vary considerably. One, which is said to be “the best in London,” gives those over sixty butcher meat four times a week, bacon or pork the fifth, and meat puddings and meat broth on the other two days. Though this is said to be the best, there are several other Unions in which the scale is practically the same, and the tendency in

all Unions is now to pay more attention to the feeding of the inmates than to any other matter. The following appeared in a paper the other day : "Ample food supply at ——." The Guardians had asked the Local Government Board to sanction an addition of half a pint of milk a day to the present dietary. The Local Government Board reply that they will do so, "provided that some readjustment be made in the present dietary." The Clerk pointed out that at present the inmates had a breakfast, lunch, a dinner, an early cup of tea and three ounces of cake, tea again with bread and butter and more cake, and then a supper. One of the Guardians, "*What* a day's feeding!"

Again, an inquest was held last year upon an inmate who had died suddenly in a London workhouse. The doctor certified that the cause of death was syncope, produced by an overloaded stomach acting upon a diseased heart.

The Coroner.—"One may say that he was killed by kindness. It may or may not be kindness to overload a man's stomach. Well, it shows that he did not go short of food."

The Doctor.—"Short! By no means. They have nothing to do but eat, drink, and sleep. And this is the third case from the same workhouse where death has been due to an overloaded stomach."

A Juror.—"When I am out of work, I shall want to go there!"

The question, however, is no new one. In the year 1835 a document, of which the following is an extract, was posted on the walls of a certain workhouse in Kent. It contained the terms of the contract between the Guardians and contractors for the catering for that workhouse. The contractors were to furnish "warm, wholesome, sweet, comfortable beds; servants to cook and serve the

victuals and attend on the poor; good, sweet, wholesome, fat meat; good, sound small beer; best flour; good Gloucester cheese; good and clean butter. Pork and salt meat were forbidden, but bacon and fish were allowed as a variety. The fires were to be good and kept up in certain rooms at all hours, so that the paupers might boil their kettles. Lastly, the contractors were to supply wigs for such as wear them or require them." Earlier again, at Bedford, Sir F. Eden gives the dietary of the workhouse where meat was given six days a week, and broth and "hasty pudding" the seventh. Of this Sir F. Eden, writing in 1797, says, "The food was better than the most industrious labourer, either then or at present, could afford himself in his own habitation. In those days small beer was usually given for supper every night, and "good strong beer" on Christmas Day.

There is the further question of non-distinctive dress. Probably every Board of Guardians in London has now adopted it, as suggested by the Local Government Board, and the general impression is that it has worked satisfactorily. Some Boards have found it useful as a means of classification, giving it only to those who return sober from their leave. Others have probably given it to all, without distinction. One difficulty that appears to arise is the difficulty of finding any dress which is "not distinctive," the real fact being that the clothes provided are as a rule so much better than those worn by people of the same class outside, that it is impossible not to identify the inmate out for his weekly walk. When the matter first came before the writer's own Board, hats and bonnets of every conceivable shape, with every variety of trimming, double-breasted reefers, and every variety of trouserings were submitted for selection. It was a most arduous task. Finally, the old men, at

least, were rigged out in a very neat and workman-like manner; but the old women were not so fortunate. One fine day they all blossomed out with dresses, some with red moons on a blue ground, some with white moons upon a brown ground. The dress, alas, though fashionable, was more distinctive than ever!

If the writer, who has been chairman for many years, off and on, of a Workhouse Examination Committee, were asked to specify the ruling characteristic of those with whom he has had to deal, he would say that it is a sort of happy-go-lucky irresponsibility. Occasionally some rather desperate characters enter a workhouse, but they seldom stay there long. There are also some who are clearly mentally or physically deficient, for whom some better system of treatment is desirable; but the majority are neither actively bad nor deficient, except in the desire to keep themselves. They know that the parish is bound to maintain them, and they ask for nothing better. There are many single men without dependents. One of them was asked recently why so many single men came into the workhouse, whilst married men were able to keep a wife and family outside. His reply was eminently candid: "I suppose it is because we ain't got no wives to keep us." But responsibility sits lightly also upon many married men. A young woman became chargeable not long ago, deserted by her husband. All that she had to show as to his whereabouts was a letter, without address, in which he exhorted her to "feed the rabbits and pigeons well whilst he was away." A married man was allowed out to look for work, leaving his wife and children chargeable, and, as is the rule, was told to report himself before the next fortnightly meeting of the Committee. He did not appear, but sent a letter to the Committee, apologising for his

absence on the ground that "he had to go to a concert at the Radical Club." Another young woman is in the workhouse, and her husband in Canada. She has received a large number of affectionate letters expressing a hope that she will join him, but the only address given is 1063 James' Street, North America, and all letters come back from the Dead Letter Office.

Another family has been in and out for a number of years. They stay out most of the summer, and come in regularly in the winter. Most of the children have been adopted by the Guardians to save them from an in-and-out career; but a new infant is born nearly every year; only a few weeks ago it was reported that Mrs W—— had presented the Guardians with another baby.

The great majority are quite well behaved whilst in the workhouse, and work fairly well under supervision. They are, except in rare instances, not unpleasant to deal with. Though impervious to exhortations to self-support, they bear no malice, and are quite friendly. Some time ago a hawker, who had been prosecuted again and again for wife desertion, and against whom a warrant was still outstanding, presented himself at the workhouse door and offered to sell the master a "bunch of sage." He was, of course, arrested and taken to the police station. On his way, he invited the warrant officer to have a drink with him.

The path of a Workhouse Examination Committee is no easy one. Its members have to deal with every variety of human nature. They are engaged in an unceasing attempt, on the one hand, to discourage pauperism; on the other, to give a helping hand to any one who shows any sign of a desire for better modes of life. They begin by the belief that every one has some good in him. Every able-bodied man who comes in for the first

time is encouraged to go out and look for work ; he is, of course, now always referred to the Labour Exchange, but seldom with any result. Work is, indeed, often found for him by the workhouse master. No one can say, when there is an efficient committee and an efficient master, that a man is "done for" when he comes into the workhouse. Special attention is paid, of course, to the younger inmates, who are never lost sight of. At one time it was the practice in many workhouses to send their able-bodied inmates to the various institutions of the Church and Salvation Armies. Some sixty or seventy of them were sent from the writer's own workhouse ; but they were returned, almost without exception, and the experience was the same elsewhere. A committee of ladies deals with single young women who come into the maternity wards, and endeavour to reinstate them in society. Generally speaking, the "curative and restorative" treatment advocated by the Royal Commission has been in practice in well-managed workhouses for a number of years. It is very difficult work, and often very disappointing. We may doubt whether the Training Schools and Colonies, of which we have heard so much of late, would have a much better result.

POOR LAW AND CHARITY

"The quality of mercy is not strained."

Merchant of Venice.

WHAT is the attitude of the public towards the question? So far as one can gather from the tone of the Press and of public speakers upon questions connected with the relief of the poor, it is one of indifference. There seem to be very few people nowadays who recognise any distinction in principle between Poor Law and charity. So long as relief of some kind is forthcoming it matters little whether it comes from the rates or from the pockets of private individuals. Co-operation between Poor Law and charity is understood to mean a small sum granted by the Guardians, supplemented by smaller and more casual amounts from private charity. Outdoor relief is usually based upon the hypothesis that "some little thing of which we don't know" is coming in from some other source, and casual charitable help, which may or may not exist, which may or may not be suppressed, is relied upon to supplement Poor Law relief admittedly inadequate. So long as the people themselves are content to live upon the parish half-a-crown, plus income denoted by x , no questions are asked.

The obliteration of the distinction between Poor Law and charity has been greatly accelerated by the recent flow of the tide in the direction of

"collectivism," as it is called. The evils of poverty are to be conjured away by State action. The "State" is to be invested with all the attributes of Christian charity. The "civic conscience" is to take the place of the individual conscience, and the civic conscience is to "find itself" in material relief and again more material relief—at least all the practical suggestions that are made from time to time appear to be in that direction.

Of course, if we are convinced that the improvement of the condition of the poor is to be found in the extension of material relief, then all questions of distinction between Poor Law and charity sink into insignificance. Our duty is plain. We have by all means in our power to bring about that condition, and to augment the volume of relief from every possible source.

No one probably will assent to the suggestion that material relief is the cure for poverty. On the contrary, every one appears to recognise—in theory at least—that material relief may do great harm. But theory is a slippery thing, and difficult to fix. Sometimes those who most vigorously denounce one form of relief as "indiscriminate" are foremost in advocating another form of relief differing only in name. There is possibly some rather loose thinking upon the matter, and a good deal of unwillingness to face facts. Above all, there is a sort of general feeling that it does not much matter what we do so long as our aims are right. The suggestion that we should be guided by experience is received—like most truisms—with ill-disguised impatience. We are told, for instance, that there are many paths to the same end; that the old economic ideas, hitherto universally accepted, are obsolete, and that new factors have come into existence; that "experiments" which have failed repeatedly in the past will

succeed now because of new conditions. At the same time no one has sufficiently defined what these new conditions are. No one has shown us that human nature has changed in these days in such a manner as to obviate old difficulties. What we need most, perhaps, is to realise that it does matter very much both to the poor and to the nation what we do, what line we adopt, and that it is therefore of supreme importance that we should each of us think the question out as clearly as possible for ourselves by the light both of the history of the past and of the experience of the present.

For the problem of poverty is no new one; neither are we, of this generation, the first who have tried to solve it. It is a question which has always become acute in ancient and highly complex civilisations in which classes have drifted apart from one another. There are plenty of object-lessons in history of attempts to mitigate poverty by large and sweeping systems of material relief, sometimes originated by the State, sometimes by great and powerful organisations.

In the Middle Ages the great abbeys supported vast hordes of poor, "dispensing," says Fuller, "mistaken charity, promiscuously entertaining some who did not need it and many who did not deserve it; yea, those abbeys did but support the poor whom they themselves had made."

Later again we see the question in a different aspect. Defoe, in his celebrated petition to Parliament, entitled "Giving Alms no Charity," speaking at a time when there were all sorts of schemes on foot for the establishment of parish stocks, or as they would be called in these days "municipal workshops," holds up for imitation the example of Queen Elizabeth, who endeavoured to solve the difficulty by the encouragement of trade and not

by relief. "Pauper ubique jacet," said our famous Queen Elizabeth when in her progress through the kingdom she saw the vast crowds of poor thronging to see her and bless her, and the thought put Her Majesty upon a continued study how to *recover her people from their poverty*, and to make their labours more profitable to themselves in particular and the nation in general, and "the wise queen found out the way how every family might live upon its labour."

We have all heard of the old Poor Law which brought this country as near to the brink of ruin as it ever has been brought; perhaps some may say we have heard of it too often, but the truth cannot be told too often, and reiteration does not make it any the less true.

It is not necessary, however, to go back very far for illustrations of the effect of wholesale and highly centralised material relief; there are many of us who have not yet forgotten the Mansion House Fund of 1885 and the effect that it had upon the poorer population of London. It may be seen to-day in London and elsewhere where Boards of Guardians have, with the perfectly honest conviction that they are doing what is kindest to the poor, removed so far as they are able all restrictions and limitations upon public relief. In London, after ten years of unexampled commercial prosperity, we have ten thousand more people chargeable to the rates than we had ten years ago. That increase is due to the action of a comparatively small number of Boards of Guardians. The richest West End parish has increased its pauperism in the ten years from 22 to 26 per thousand of the population, and actually has more paupers per thousand than several of the poorest East End parishes. A North London Board has increased its pauperism from 19 to 21 per thousand;

a Central London Board from 65 to 83 per thousand; a South London Board from 32 to 51 per thousand; an East London Board from 17 to 26 per thousand. Yet these Boards are no nearer to the solution of the problem of poverty than other Boards which have adopted a contrary policy.

The worst of it is that a policy of lavish relief may go on for a few years, and then comes inevitable reaction. No rates nor even imperial taxation can cope with the increased demand or the wastage which is the result of such a policy. The State, or in other words, that section of the population which maintains itself independently, cannot stand the drag upon it indefinitely, and has to shake itself clear before it is itself submerged. But meanwhile it has taught the poor to look to it in all contingencies, and to live from hand to mouth, and when the crisis comes, as come it must, their suffering is ten times more acute because they have no reserves to fall back upon.

In the last ten years the expenditure on the relief of the poor has gone up from £8,600,000 to £11,500,000, or about 30 per cent., though they have been ten years of great prosperity. It has touched the highest point ever known in the history of the country, and is still growing. Meanwhile all sorts of proposals for further expenditure are in the air. A large section of the London School Board recently proposed to charge the rates with the feeding of school children. There is a tendency to turn Poor Law Infirmaries into municipal hospitals. Many would charge public bodies with the duty of finding work for the unemployed. Many more would throw the entire maintenance of old age upon the rates and taxes, and pension schemes varying in estimated

amount from ten millions to thirty millions a year are in everybody's mouths.¹ In fact the possibilities of State action are regarded as almost unlimited. Apart from questions directed towards the actual relief of the poor, there are all sorts of other proposals in the air. The State is to house the poor, and, in its attempts to do so, finds itself upon the horns of a dilemma. Either it must let at unremunerative and eleemosynary rents, or it must house those who were sufficiently well housed before. It is to buy up and work all sorts of commercial undertakings; it is to pay high wages to those whom it employs, and to supply the consumer—cheap. The municipal debt last year amounted to £270,000,000 or about one-third of the National Debt. The increase over the previous year was £14,000,000, a sufficiently rapid rate of progress.

Of course Poor Law administrators have nothing to do with all this except to remember that their expenditure is only part of a much wider question. The modern idea of the State as an omnipotent charitable agency is quite at variance with that which the older generation were taught and believed in. The matter is one so vital not to the poor alone but to the whole country, of which the daily wage-earners are the basis and foundation, that it affects, possibly more than any other question foreign or domestic, the future of the nation.

We have travelled far from the teachings of the older economists often enunciated, seldom accepted. They believed that the true line of progress was to be found in the adequate payment of labour and in the self-restraint and self-reliance of the industrial classes themselves. They regarded relief by the State with the utmost jealousy because they

¹ *Note*, 1912.—Most of these proposals have now been carried into effect.

believed it to be antagonistic to both these conditions. They believed that whilst no civilised country can allow any of its citizens to perish for the want of the necessities of life, whilst in other words food, shelter, clothing, and warmth must be provided for every destitute person who applies for it, yet that the position of those in receipt of public relief should be "less eligible" than that of the independent labourer. The words "less eligible" do not mean that it is to be harsh or inhuman; on the contrary, the maintenance provided is to be good and sufficient, but it must not attract those to it who can by any means support themselves without it. They did not consider, moreover, that legal relief was to be a substitute for the obligations of personal charity, and, in the development of their idea, charitable action has been assigned a definite place.

The outward expression of this doctrine has always been understood to be the offer of institutional relief by the State. Of course it has been widely departed from in many cases, and we may admit at once that it would be harsh to apply it suddenly and rigidly in any district where the contrary practice has long prevailed, unless at the same time some steps are taken to deal with the "hard cases" by voluntary action. The utmost that even those who believe in it can wish is that it should be gradually and humanely applied. This much, however, is certain, judging at least from all the experience that we have ready to hand, that the more widely we depart from this principle the greater become the difficulties of State relief, the more numerous and more miserable the poor.

The leading feature of State relief as compared with charitable relief is that it is compulsorily levied. Next to this come its centralisation, its indefinite ownership, its indefinite limits. Owing to its

centralisation it has the same sort of attraction for the very poor and those whose lives are spent in shadow as a lighthouse has for birds, moths, and other winged things which are drawn to it and beat themselves to death against the glass. The poor get to measure their lives by it from the cradle to the grave. They look on it as a right either as a compensation for the wrongs of "the social system" or as an insurance because they have paid rates. It is idle to explain that if it is to be looked upon in that light every one would have the right to draw upon it in proportion to their contributions, and the whole system would have to be rearranged upon an actuarial basis. They have no notion where it comes from or what are its limits. It is a sort of purse of Fortunatus into which every one dips. The Socialist uses it, quite candidly, to advance his doctrines. The ambitious local administrator uses it to win popularity. The clergyman dips into it for his parish poor. The employer of labour—not unfrequently—uses it as a means of pensioning an old and worn-out employee. It is the prey of every one. "Where the carcase is there are the eagles gathered together." Meanwhile those who administer public relief are administering that of which their own contribution represents so small a part that the personal motive for economy and restraint is practically non-existent, and the number of those who have sufficient faith to bear unpopularity and reputation for harshness is exceedingly small.

But even if there were none of these difficulties, State relief remains as far as ever from charitable relief. The essence of charity is personal feeling, and it implies much more than the mere gift. But how can we say this of public relief? So far as the poor are concerned they learn to look upon it as a right, the withholding of which is an injury. "Why

don't some one make 'em act honest?" said an old lady outside a certain Board Room not long ago after she had been refused outdoor relief. So far as the administrators are concerned, what real personal feeling can there be between a Board of Guardians and a host of recipients of relief most of whom are personally unknown to them? In country districts applicants for relief are not even seen by the Guardians as a body. All that they know of them as a rule is that they are "recommended" by a local Guardian or the relieving officer, coupled with a sort of tacit log-rolling which says, "Vote for my man to-day and I will vote for yours to-morrow."

The abstract love of the poor which is so much in the air nowadays, cannot be held to be a substitute for this personal feeling. Abstract love of the poor is sometimes quite reconcilable with concrete indifference for a poor person. The gun scatters so widely that it hits nothing.

How, again, can we reconcile Christian charity with the idea of a tax levied by the arm of the law, with the voting by A of B's money to the use of C, with the usual penalties if B fails to pay? The feelings of the man who finds his demand notes rising year after year are very far from Christian. He who does not pay his rates finds bailiffs in his house, and perhaps eventually retires to Holloway to ponder in seclusion upon the mysteries of the civic conscience and civic benevolence.

Again, we have heard much of late of the difficulty of housing the poor and of the prohibitive rents in great towns. It was calculated the other day that in a certain part of London, upon a house rented at 8s. a week, 7d. of that 8s. represented the amount levied for the relief of the poor. Undoubtedly some part of the housing difficulty in London is due to the ever-increasing

incidence of rates. The odd 7d., regularly put by, would provide an old age pension.

The reason, therefore, why the older economists looked upon legal relief as a dangerous expedient—a playing, as it were, with edged tools—is clear. On the other hand they believed that they saw in voluntary effort a force involving infinitely less danger, and yet one which, if fully developed and wisely directed, would be capable of meeting all emergencies not provided for by the Poor Law. For charitable relief, whatever form it takes, or whatever its effects, possesses at least this broad distinction from State relief, namely, that it is voluntarily provided, and usually comes from those who can best afford it.

It may be at once admitted that there is much charitable relief in these days which is as devoid of the real spirit of charity as any public relief can be. The fact is that “charity” nowadays has come to be identified almost exclusively with the giving of money or some form of material relief. There is, undoubtedly, much so-called “charity” which is not only formal and unreal, but which even has mixed motives in the background. Charity of that kind blesseth neither him that gives nor him that takes. It certainly would not pass muster with St Paul. For instance, we see a beggar in the streets. A passing emotion, or the desire to get rid of him, prompts us to give him a small coin. Probably most of us have done it. When he is out of sight we forget all about him. Charity of that sort neither “suffers long nor is kind.” Or again, charity “doth not behave itself unseemly.” Has any one ever been to a big society bazaar, or even read an account of one in the newspapers? We all know the familiar headline, “In the Sacred Cause of Charity,” followed by a description of the great people present (and some little ones) and of

their dresses, of *cafés chantants* and lady palmists and raffles, all of which is, possibly, harmless enough in itself, but hardly recognisable as "the sacred cause of charity." Again, "Charity vaunteth not itself . . . is not puffed up"; but the idea of humility is the last thing that suggests itself when we read the reports and advertisements of many charitable institutions of the present day. The percentage of success upon a huge scale claimed in these reports strikes dumb those who have been attempting similar work upon a more modest scale, and who have found the enormous difficulty of achieving real success even in a single case. There is, to say the least, a looseness of statement which it is impossible to justify. How well we know the phrase, "so many benefited." "Benefited" may mean anything from a free meal, or a pair of boots, to social salvation. But charity is supposed to "rejoice in the truth."

Perhaps it is too strong to say, as was said recently in a sermon in the West End, that some of these reports would "put to shame the fraudulent prospectus of a joint-stock company." Probably these statements are often made because their authors have not followed up sufficiently the results of their work, and really believe that if they have given somebody something they have relieved poverty. In other cases there is undoubtedly a tendency to think that exaggeration is necessary, and even justifiable, in appealing for public support.

Or again, looking at it from another point of view, is the "charity" which rejoices in being taken in, the charity which "rejoiceth in the truth"? We all know the phrase, "I had sooner be deceived ninety-nine times than send one deserving person away unhelped." We send cheques to begging-letter writers with a sort of comfortable assurance that we *are* being deceived. We forget that for

the one person whom we have "helped or benefited," that is to say, to whom we have given something, we have dragged ninety-nine people a little lower into the slough of fraud and mendicancy. We forget that most of them have wives and children whom they are dragging down with them into the abyss.

Then again, there is the "charity" of mixed motives. At election time in some places it rains coals and blankets and free dinners; a parliamentary candidate is judged by the size of his cheques to local societies and institutions. If a rich man, he has very possibly his tongue in his cheek; if a poor one, he gives with groans and mutterings. In any case, rich or poor, they both look upon it as part of the exigencies of our representative system, and regard it as a sort of blackmail. It makes very little difference to them whether their subscriptions are given to cottage hospitals or village ping-pong clubs. Rich men, again, not infrequently give big cheques with an eye upon political or social advancement — cheques which may be called "Pilkerton peerage" cheques. A newspaper starts a fund, and gets copy and circulation. Not long ago a new weekly paper was started in life with a charitable fund. The paper only lasted for three or four weeks, and there is no record as to what happened to the charitable fund; but its object was sufficiently clear. Is that the charity which "seeketh not her own"?

Of course, the cheque of the millionaire, the fund of the newspaper, even the subscriptions of the M.P., may be as much above suspicion as Cæsar's wife. Everything depends upon the motive. An old writer says that "well-doing is to be judged by the intention," and "to judge a man we must a long time follow and very curiously mark his steps." Charity will, of course, give its money

as it will give much besides. Money is all that some people can give, and if it be given from a sense of duty it is true charity, though it carries with it the further duty of seeing that the money is rightly applied. Speaking generally, however, the giving of money is the easiest thing for those who have plenty of it, and it involves, *per se*, the minimum of personal feeling, the minimum of personal sacrifice; but we live in a commercial age, and no one who watches the signs of the times, or directs his attention to the utterances of public men and of the Press, or takes note of the references to the subject in modern drama, can fail to be struck by the fact that, so far as the public mind is concerned, money-giving has monopolised the whole landscape of charity.

Again, we have all read our Dickens, and remember the “telescopic” philanthropy of the immortal Mrs Jellyby and the “wholesale” philanthropy of the equally famous Mrs Pardiggle. Mrs Jellyby, as we all know, was so wrapt up in the affairs of the natives of Africa, of “Borrioboola Gha,” and of the “brotherhood of man,” that she found no time to look after her own family. “‘It’s disgraceful,’ said poor Miss Jellyby; ‘the whole house is disgraceful. The children are disgraceful, I’m disgraceful, Pa’s miserable, and no wonder. Priscilla drinks — she’s always drinking. It’s a great shame, and a great story of you if you say you didn’t smell her to-day. It was as bad as a public-house waiting at dinner, you know it was.’” And again—“‘I wish Africa was dead,’ she said on a sudden. ‘I do,’ she said. ‘Don’t talk to me, Miss Summerson, I hate it and detest it: it’s a beast!’”

We may ask ourselves whether there is no “telescopic philanthropy” to-day? whether there are no rich people who pay starvation wages and

give big cheques? or who draw their income from dilapidated house property or shady financial undertakings, bringing ruin to hundreds, and figure prominently in the philanthropic world. Possibly there are, at the present moment, workpeople in factories, weekly tenants in poor districts, small shareholders in joint-stock companies, who would say with Miss Jellyby, "I wish philanthropy was dead; I hate it and detest it: it's a beast."

It has been necessary to dwell at some length upon this dubious sort of "charity," because we must clear our minds upon the subject. It is, however, after all, only the froth and effervescence which is on the surface, and which, though much greater in volume than it need be, or ought to be, yet is quite insignificant in comparison with another sort of charity which lies deeper down, a charity much more in accordance with the ideals of St Paul.

That charity is not much recognised, certainly not advertised at all, but it is the charity which is felt. It is the sort of charity which takes trouble—which helps lame dogs over stiles, which goes out of its own way to lead blind men over crossings—a thing we may see done almost any day in the streets of London. It may have no money to give, but it does not spare either personal sympathy or personal effort. It begins at home because it believes that its first duty is to itself, the duty, namely, of self-respect. What it considers essential for itself it tries to promote in others. Its next concern is with those immediately around it, those of its own house, its neighbours, its employees, its friends. When it has dealings with those previously unknown to it, it makes neighbours and friends of them, and is satisfied with nothing less. If it has money to give, it does not give simply because it is asked, but because it has satisfied

itself that the gift will be of real service to him who receives it. It constitutes an undercurrent of spontaneous and natural charity, the depth and force of which is seldom realised because it flows unseen. It keeps in motion some of the most essential machinery of the social organism, and generates, so to speak, a repairing force of enormous potency. It has its perennial springs in all that is best in human nature, and flows weaker or stronger as these springs rise or fall.

It manifests itself chiefly in the mutual affection and helpfulness of family life; after that in the sympathy of friend and friend, neighbour and neighbour, employer and employed. It comes into play quite naturally and when it is most required; there is no compulsion, no ostentation or shadow of unworthy motive on the part of the giver, whilst it can be accepted without loss of self-respect. This sort of silent charity pervades all our social relations, and tends to fill up their gaps almost insensibly. Parents support their children in infancy, and children help their parents in sickness and old age. Relations less closely connected help one another to an enormous extent. Who is there who would allow a relation to go to the wall if he could do anything to prevent it? The charity of poor neighbours to one another is proverbial. The "friendly lead" is the commonest feature of the workshop. Every friendly society has its benevolent funds. There are all sorts of social ties or "clannishness" too various for enumeration—membership of the same profession, inhabitancy of the same village or country town, old schoolfellowship or membership of the same college, all of which cement a mutual obligation to help in time of need.

With regard to employer and employed, it is often the fashion to say that the old feelings of mutual respect and affection have disappeared, and

that there is now only—to use an academic phrase—a “cash nexus” between them. Of course that may be the case in some instances, but if it is to become universal it is much to be deplored. One may even be sufficiently optimistic to believe that it is impossible for people to work together long, in the relationship of employer and employed, without the establishment of a very real mutual respect and affection. We must all of us know some old employees, old servants who have been and are some of the best friends we have ever had. The writer has, in the course of his own experience, often had to appeal to employers of labour to help an old servant in time of trouble, and he has almost always found that the sense of obligation—when the service has been good service—has been freely recognised.

If it were possible to tabulate any statistics as to the extent to which this spontaneous and honourable sense of obligation operates as a repairing force in society, I think it would surprise some of those who talk glibly about a “cash nexus.” The old age pension fund alone, for instance, which is the natural outcome of this feeling, must be of enormous proportions. There is hardly any firm of size or standing that has not its list of pensioners. The number of those pensioned by smaller firms or private employers is almost innumerable. Then there is a form of quasi pension which, as Mr Charles Booth says, is met by the provision of “suitable light work at wages which are based upon the needs of the recipient rather than upon value of the services rendered,” and “is based upon a kindly social usage.” Almost every firm in London has a few old employees retained upon these terms. In the country upon a great number of farms, upon almost every estate, it is still the custom to maintain this “kindly social usage.”

The repairing force, again, which consists in the performance of family obligations is of even more importance to the poor. It is at present widely recognised as a paramount duty, and has become of an increasing strength since the reform of the Poor Law. Under the old Poor Law it had almost disappeared, and it will disappear again if we entertain the idea of transferring its responsibilities to the State.

For that the assumption of responsibility by the State means the throwing off of responsibility by the individual is a mere truism. All Guardians must be aware of the constant struggle that exists even now between the two forces. Of course no one will do that which he believes it to be the duty of some one else to do. Children will no longer help to support their own parents if they are taught that the duty devolves upon the State, and they are at the same time taxed to maintain other people's parents. Under the old Poor Law they actually claimed payment for sitting with their old parents when ill. And so on throughout the other natural obligations indicated above. Extensions of State relief in any form must lead to the contraction of voluntary obligations of all sorts, because no one will do the same thing twice over, and will tax himself voluntarily for that which he is already taxed by the State.

At the back of this great volume of "natural" charity which some believe to be of such enormous importance as a repairing force in society—but a force which is extremely sensitive and not difficult to displace—comes a reserve force which, for want of a better name, may be designated as the charity of the public; the charity, that is to say, of those whose sympathies go out towards mankind in general; who are distressed at the suffering and misery that they see daily in the streets, or read of

in the newspapers, but with which they themselves, for want of opportunity, are not brought directly into contact. This sort of charity—which is very real charity—often fails for want of knowledge. It too often becomes the prey of the professional mendicant. It seldom knows much of the result of its action. It is spasmodic and uneven. It ebbs and flows according to circumstances frequently quite accidental. A picturesque report in a newspaper causes it to overflow. The fact that it has been imposed upon in an individual case causes it to recede almost out of sight. It is a very true charity because it proceeds from altogether the best motives, and it is of almost unlimited volume. If it were only possible to inspire it with greater knowledge and greater sense of responsibility it might become, as indeed it sometimes does become, of the greatest value as a supplementary force to the charity of natural obligations, and might serve to fill up its deficiencies. As it is, this sort of charity too often supplements irregularly small doles of Poor Law relief. Charity tries to throw part of its responsibility upon the Poor Law, and the Poor Law tries to throw part of its responsibility upon charity. Neither knows with any certainty what the other is doing, and their unfortunate victim falls between two stools. Many believe that Poor Law and charity should be kept quite distinct, and that the Poor Law, being a compulsory obligation, should not be regarded as charity at all. But those who think otherwise, and believe that charitable relief can legitimately supplement Poor Law relief, should at least feel the responsibility of being sure of their facts.

The position, then, is this. We have a great inert mass of poverty to deal with, the existence of which we all admit and we all deplore. In which direction does the remedy lie? Does it lie in the

further increase of material relief or does it lie elsewhere?

As has been already pointed out, the tendency of the present day is towards such increase. Both Poor Law and charitable relief have greatly increased in the last decade, and all sorts of schemes for the acceptance of further responsibility by the State are in the air, all of which take the shape of further relief. And in spite of it all poverty shows no sign of diminution. On the contrary, if we may accept the statements of such an authority as Mr Rowntree, things are growing worse and worse and more hopeless. In his book, which is attracting so much attention, he states that in the city of York 9 per cent. of the poor do not earn sufficient for the bare support of a "moderate" family, computed at three or four, even if all expenditure upon luxuries such as beer and tobacco be eliminated. Though there will probably be some difference of opinion as to the bases of his argument, and the inferences drawn, yet no one will doubt that there is sufficient truth behind them to call for our most anxious attention; and that is, probably, the object of his work.

If the solution of the problem lay in further schemes of relief, we should all be in favour of them. On the other hand, if we think otherwise, it is our duty to say so, and to point out what we believe to be the better way even though that way be difficult and hard to follow.

Those who have studied the history of the question in the past and watched it closely in the present day, those who have been engaged in Poor Law and charitable administration for many years, and have watched the effect of relief upon individuals and families over a long period, have gained the right to be heard in this matter, even though their voice be a "voice crying in the wilderness." Perhaps it

is better, after all, to be a "voice crying in the wilderness" than one stump orating in the market places.

In our own time the attempts to mitigate poverty by the action of the State have been many. Some have already been mentioned, but there are some others worthy of notice. In the early nineties Vestries and other Local Boards were urged by the Local Government Board to provide work for the unemployed. That led to vast expenditure upon road-sweeping and stone-breaking, as we all remember, an expenditure with, to say the least of it, very chequered results. Of late we have been instructed to make all sorts of alterations in our workhouses, some of them undoubtedly very necessary, and not to offer the House to the aged deserving poor, but to give them "adequate" outdoor relief. For many years past the same Board has been urging on the construction of enormous and splendid infirmaries which are gradually tending to become municipal hospitals not confined to the destitute only, and there are many who contend that the whole charge of the sick should be taken over by the State. The attempt by an important section of the London School Board to throw the charge of feeding "underfed" school children upon the rates has already been noted.

It will not be forgotten, moreover, that by the abolition of school fees a very considerable sum has of late years been added to the income of the labouring population. There were many prophecies, at the time, of the advantage that would accrue to them in consequence.

Alongside of all this we have had enormous schemes of voluntary charity. Many years ago we were all startled by the proposals of General Booth and his book "In Darkest England and the Way Out." The result of that book has been a great

expenditure upon free shelters for the poor, labour homes and farms, free or exceedingly cheap meals, and other widely advertised and highly centralised forms of material relief. It may be mentioned in passing that General Booth was not the first in the field. At the beginning of the century there was a predecessor of his who undertook for a million pounds to cure poverty and to beat the French. Then came Mr Charles Booth with his great and valuable book upon the poor of London. The outcome of his book is a proposal for universal pensions, a proposal which has "caught on," and which is seriously entertained in many quarters. Besides all this, there is an enormous amount of free meals for children and adults—robin dinners, soup kitchens, etc. Free medical relief at hospitals and dispensaries is ever growing in amount. Can we say after all these years that any impression has been made upon the volume of poverty, or that the way *has* been found out of "Darkest England?" According to Mr Rowntree's book, there is a large percentage of the poor who do not earn sufficient to provide for the barest necessities of themselves and their families. It is a significant fact that a large proportion of the most distressing cases cited by Mr Rowntree are in receipt of relief.

There are still some who believe that much of this, at least, is a beginning at the wrong end, and that poverty will never be cured by great schemes of centralised relief, amongst which State relief must of necessity take the first place; who believe, with the older economists, that the real and only true line of progress is to be found in the adequate payment of labour, and in the self-restraint and self-respect of the poorer classes themselves, and that such schemes, instead of acting as the cure for poverty, serve to render it inveterate, because on the one hand they condone the under-payment of

labour and make it possible, whilst on the other hand they give a sanction to irresponsibility amongst the poor.

With regard to the payment of labour, undoubtedly there has been great improvement in the past century if we may trust such authorities as the late Professor Thorold Rogers, Mr Shaw Lefevre, and many others. There is still much to be desired in many directions, but so far as we can judge from the reports of the Labour Department of the Board of Trade and the statistics given in the Report of the Labour Commission that improvement still continues. The progress made has been made, be it remembered, under a Poor Law which, in principle at least, is confined to the relief of destitution, though in practice it has often gone far afield. Many still believe that the maintenance of that principle is the sheet anchor of future progress.

Next to and of equal importance with the adequate payment of labour is the strengthening of the desire for self-maintenance and self-respect. We hear much of altruism and collectivism in these days. We hear but little of self-respect. If we do hear of it, it is apt to be identified with selfishness and self-love. Yet we have authority for saying even of self-love—

“Self-love, my lord, is not so vile a sin
As self-neglecting.”

With the weakening or annihilation of self-respect and the principle of self-maintenance the evils which we seek to abolish grow in intensity; no relief can supply the gap which is created by the weakening of character. Most of us probably know many concrete cases of people who have been ruined by “charity” and the Poor Law between them. We see them in the streets every day. Self-respect is a

sensitive thing, not difficult to unbalance, especially if we are taught, as we often are, that we can depend upon others, and yet, by some juggling of language, retain our independence. Most of us probably know old labourers in the country and elsewhere whose great and legitimate pride it is that they have never had to apply to the parish for anything. They have no illusions on the subject. The same feeling is strong amongst members of the great friendly societies.

Pauperism, be it remembered, is not necessarily connected with vice and drunkenness as is too often assumed. Its commonest form is an indefinite weakening of character, a dulling of spirit, a sort of lowering of pitch, to which the very poor and those to whom life is hard are necessarily the most subject. It comes disguised in all sorts of garbs and sweetened with all kinds of relishes. Many roads, broad and easy, lead down to it, whilst the upward path is narrow and steep. The best defence against it is the armour of self-respect, a real self-respect which is not to be cheated out of itself by the subtleties of modern logicians.

Next to the increase of payment for labour, and the growth of the spirit of self-maintenance, we believe in the growth of the spirit of real charity. As the first two conditions fulfil themselves more and more, so will the problem that has to be dealt with by charity simplify itself, and charity will become more capable of effecting its purpose. The different sorts of charity have been already glanced at. The most important, though the least recognised, is that which has been designated as "natural" charity—the charity, that is to say, of those who know and respect one another. But imagined possibilities of State relief are directly antagonistic to that charity, as we have already seen. We shall be told that it is hard to ask children to support

their parents; the real question is whether they should support their own parents or some one else's parents. We shall be told that the rich ought to be made to support the poor. But we may ask whether that is a satisfactory ideal, especially for those who are trying to build up a democracy upon a sound foundation. It implies a permanence of the present conditions, whereas we believe the truer ideal to be that the poor should be gradually recovered from their poverty and raised to independence. It will be said again that this "natural" charity cannot be relied upon; that there are many so poor and so friendless that they would be altogether outside of its scope. That may be the case in some instances, but it is not, by any means, generally true. The almost unlimited variety of that charity has already been glanced at, and there are few people who go through life without making some friends. Even if it is partly true we must remember that whatever we do there will be some hard cases, and that we shall always have the poor with us. But if the charity of natural obligation sometimes fails, we have still behind it an immense volume of what has been called the charity of the public, such as the endowed charities, and an almost boundless almsgiving, in reserve. That charity, we believe, is beginning more and more to recognise its responsibilities, but there is still much to be done. If we could only focus it upon those cases of distress which are really friendless, and in which money can be of real service, we should have made a great stride upon the "way out" of "Darkest England."

The fact is that there is no one way out. As the causes of poverty are various, so are the remedies. But those remedies must strike at the root of the disease rather than deal with symptoms. With regard to the payment of labour we can each of us do something in our generation to create a

new state of public opinion upon the subject. There are many firms and private employers nowadays who make it a point of honour to pay their employees properly. We can help to promote the growth of the opinion that it is discreditable to do otherwise. There are other means of aiming at the same end ; co-operation and profit-sharing are all roads in the same direction. So, too, are trades unions, though they, like every one else, sometimes make mistakes.

Another reason for underpayment of labour is inefficiency of labour. Both boys and girls when they leave school too often learn no trade, but go out straight to some unskilled employment. Here is an opportunity for those who act as school managers or who work amongst the poor. It is not difficult to make oneself acquainted with the conditions of employment in the various trades. A word of advice at the right moment to a boy or girl leaving school, or to their parents, may be the means of altering the course of a lifetime.

Or again, it is possible to do much in the direction of forwarding the growth of the great friendly societies, the value of whose work is seldom sufficiently recognised. We can, if we like, join them ourselves, either as financial or honorary members, and so gain an insight into that work and make it more generally known. It is no exaggeration to say that if every one who could do so joined a good and sound friendly society when young, the social question would be half-way towards solution. It is an admitted fact that members of friendly societies comparatively seldom have to apply for relief, and they believe themselves that they can, if not interfered with, solve the question of support in old age. We read in the February number of "Unity," which is a journal widely circulated amongst Foresters, Oddfellows,

and kindred societies—"The friendly societies can and will eventually provide pensions in old age as one of the ordinary benefits of the societies, and this is the only proper solution of the subject." They have long ago solved the problem of maintenance in sickness.

This is magnificent work, and those who will can forward it—either from inside or outside the societies—especially amongst the young. Managers of Board and Voluntary Schools, of Boy's Clubs and Brigades and other similar organisations, have great opportunities. As a step in this direction a manual by Mr Pinhorn, the well-known Oddfellow, has already been adopted for the use of schools by the London School Board, and it might well be adopted by School Management Committees throughout the country. The value of a good friendly society lies not only in its provident side and in the benefits secured, but in the fact that the lad who joins it finds himself at once in the company of the best and most self-respecting class of working men.

Another thing we can do is to endeavour to improve the work of voluntary charity, to turn bad charity into good charity, and to direct it aright. Many of us probably are trustees of endowed charities; there is much room for improvement in their administration. Or if we are not, we can at least try to guide wisely our own almsgiving and that of our friends.

Guardians have to recognise more and more the dignity and responsibility of their work. Unlike some other local authorities, they have to deal with human nature and not with things. Sometimes there is too much tendency, not only in ourselves, but in that august Board which rules over us, to become microscopic, and to deal with trifles. We receive circular after circular enjoining on us various elaborate dietary scales which are supposed to

contain the exact amount of protein and calories which go to make up a sufficiently able-bodied but not too able-bodied pauper. Then we receive other circulars, and we divide the people in our workhouses into Classes A, B, and C, and we put one class into a room with pictures, and another class into a room without, and so forth. Then we introduce "relaxations." One result of Mr Chaplin's circular has been that a certain Board of Guardians in London have held a special meeting to consider the question of introducing ping-pong into the workhouse, and have decided to do it. This is not to say that dietaries are of no importance and relaxations unnecessary, but that while we busy ourselves with these smaller matters we are apt to lose sight of the wider issues of Poor Law administration.

Do not suppose that all that has been suggested can be done in a day. Evils of long standing cannot be eradicated by a stroke of the pen, and any sudden reversal of policy must be harsh to those who have grown up under an older system. All this has been said before, and there is little probability that it will meet with general acceptance. Still it is the honest belief of some of those who have taken part for many years in both Poor Law and charitable administration, and who have tried to think out these matters.

The melancholy part of it all is that we never arrive at any settled policy. The Legislature has ordained in its wisdom that the administration of the Poor Law—perhaps the most difficult administration that there is—shall be entrusted to any one who chooses to come forward at election time, and we all know how difficult it is to get qualified people to offer themselves. It is perhaps not to be wondered at, as the office brings with it a good deal of drudgery and but little

credit. Every *ex parte* statement against a Board of Guardians is greedily swallowed by newspapers and by that section of the public which thinks that it has sufficiently disposed of Guardians when it calls them Bumbles. Then in a year or two, just when a Guardian is beginning to learn his work, and it takes him all that time to do so, the Legislature says again that he must take his chance of being turned out. And so we have a constant fluctuation of policy which is mischievous and unjust to the poor, because they never know what to expect.

A word of protest may be added against those who go about amongst the poor preaching the doctrines of helplessness: that they are not responsible for their own characters, but are the victims of their "environment": that they cannot save, or that if they can, they ought not to do so. Of course we all like to think that we are the victims of circumstances; that faults in our character are hereditary, or the result of our education and surroundings, and not of our own making. Whatever scintilla of truth there may be in it, it is a miserable doctrine to preach to poor people. The doctrine that a man cannot save without injury to his family is sure to be welcome to the man who spends possibly one-eighth of his income in a public house. On the other hand, the man who is saving something, and there are not a few such, can only be discouraged by such doctrines. If any one has ever inquired into the question of children attending Board Schools insufficiently fed, what will he find? Will he find they are the children of those who have sufficient sense of responsibility to put something on one side for the future, or will he find that they are the children of those who spend their money upon themselves in the public house and elsewhere? It

is difficult to have any patience with people who do these things, people who are as often as not "University professors" and the like. They invent phrases and shibboleths in their studies which we recognise afterwards in the workshops, in the working men's clubs and debating societies, and at the street corners at election time. In doing so they are causing irreparable mischief to the character of the poor.

For that character we believe to be of supreme importance to the nation at large. We have been told that we shall always have the poor with us, but we have never been told that one class is to be doomed to eternal poverty. But that is what must happen if the poor resign themselves to poverty, and are satisfied to be "kept" by the State. We want, like Queen Elizabeth, to recover people from poverty and to give free play to those forces which are at work in an upward direction. We want to stimulate their "ambition to rise," as was said many years ago by one of the best friends the poor ever had.¹ Lord Rosebery, speaking at Liverpool the other day, said that for an empire it is necessary to have an imperial people. But we cannot have physical efficiency without moral efficiency; we cannot construct an imperial people out of a spiritless and pauperised population.


¹ Mine is that masculine sort of charity which would inculcate in the minds of the labouring population the love of independence, the privilege of self-respect, the disdain of being patronised or petted, the desire to accumulate, and the ambition to rise.—COBDEN.

SOCIAL REFORM AND THE NEW SOCIALISM

WHEN I was asked to write a paper for this Conference, and to choose my own subject, my thoughts at first naturally turned to some of the many points of practical Poor Law administration which it has been the custom to discuss at these Conferences in the past. But then it occurred to me, as it has probably occurred to many others, that such discussions are losing their interest, because they are rapidly becoming out of date; that, for instance, questions such as the treatment of the aged poor, of the able-bodied, of the children, and the comparative merits of indoor and outdoor relief, are losing their significance so far as the Poor Law is concerned, because they are being withdrawn one by one from the purview of the Poor Law altogether. Indeed it appears likely that by the time the Royal Commission issues its Report there will be only the shadow of the Poor Law to report about, because the aged poor will have been transferred to a pension authority, the able-bodied to the bodies specially formed for the purpose of finding work for the unemployed, the children to the education committees, and the sick and impotent to some public health authority. Already the London County Council have had a sort of full-dress rehearsal of the dissolution of Boards of Guardians. They have already, in theory, torn us limb from limb,

and after throwing certain parts of us, rather contemptuously, to Borough Councils, they have reserved the lion's share for themselves to be assimilated at their leisure. In view of these considerations I have thought it better to raise a discussion to-day upon the wider issues underlying these changes, rather than to any specific points of Poor Law administration: issues with which we are concerned not only as Poor Law Guardians, who may be presumed to have special knowledge of questions concerned with the relief of the poor, but as citizens.

I suppose that we shall all agree that the force which is at the back of all this is that which is known as "Socialism"; but before going further it is necessary to be clear as to what is meant by the word itself. There are probably few words which are used by so many, and the meaning of which has been exactly thought out by so few. It is rare, except within a very small circle, to find two people who are agreed about it. Broadly speaking, every one who is not purely selfish, but has aspirations for better social conditions, and is prepared to help towards these conditions, is a socialist: in that sense, most of those who are the most convinced individualists are very practical socialists. They have no selfish ends to serve, but they believe that the solution of the social problem is to be found in the strengthening of the position of the individual, and their idea of social service is directed to that end. They deplore, as much as any one can deplore, the evils of poverty and the contrasts of poverty and wealth. But their remedy is to stimulate the ambition and accumulative instincts of the industrial classes, rather than to supersede the necessity for these qualities. They agree with Carlyle, that Poor Laws and poor relief of all kinds are "an anodyne, not a remedy," and that to accept them



as a remedy is a policy of despair. Those who hold these opinions are certainly deficient neither in social instincts nor in social sympathies, and their position is quite consistent with that of the earlier Christian socialists such as Kingsley and Maurice.

At the other end of the scale we have another sort of Socialism altogether, a Socialism which is very distinct and definite, and the adherents to which know their own mind very clearly: a Socialism which, whether practicable or not, is quite logical and consistent. I mean that academic Socialism which is the inheritor of the traditions of the French Revolution, and of the doctrines of the German socialists of the middle of the last century, and which must be looked upon as the source of inspiration of all the English Socialism of the day, and the centre round which a mass of social theory gravitates. It would, as we all know, throw the whole responsibility for social welfare upon the State, and for that purpose would abolish private property as an institution, and vest all the means of production in the State, which would organise industry and carry on all manufactures, and whilst accepting the responsibility for the maintenance of its citizens, would regulate their lives and affairs upon lines adopted by the vote of the majority. It cannot be denied that Socialism of this kind has made great advances of late years; not that, in my opinion, it is itself any nearer realisation, but that it has acted with constantly increasing momentum in the promotion of another form of Socialism to which I shall presently refer. In the future it can, I think, never be more than a dream. In the past it has never been more than a theory: there is no instance in history in which society has organised itself upon such principles; many attempts have been made to form communities upon such a basis

from the time of Robert Owen onwards, but they have without exception failed. The property instinct is too deeply seated in human nature to tolerate such conditions. Neither would any Englishman endure for a day such a State regulation of his private life as must follow. Apart from that, our experience of the management of business affairs by public bodies, which are constantly changing in opinion and constitution, is not such as to warrant us in looking forward with complacency to the management of our industrial affairs by the State.

I do not know whether any one here has seen a little book by the late Dr Richter, who was leader of the German Liberal Party, entitled "Pictures of the Socialistic Future." It is a fanciful story of a German workman and his family who have been ardent supporters of the social revolution, and opens at the time when that revolution is supposed to have been accomplished amidst great popular rejoicings. At first everything is *couleur de rose*, and our friend the workman cannot congratulate himself sufficiently. But before long difficulties begin to arise; his children bring in the news that the savings banks are closed and guarded by soldiers. Property is abolished and community of goods established, so that private citizens have no further need for savings, and the savings of his life-time are appropriated by the State. Next, the organisation of industry by the State necessitates the separation of the family. His daughter's betrothed is sent away from Berlin to a distant German town because there are too many of his trade in Berlin. The youngest child has to be sent to the State institution for children, and the mother is only allowed to visit her at fixed times and under strict regulations; she is not even allowed to take her a toy, or a packet of sweets, "for fear of

favouritism." The family have to take their meals at the public tables, where every one has the same food, and though the complaints as to its quality are many and loud no attention is paid to them. The workmen in the State workshops refuse to recognise the authority of the State foremen, and are in a chronic condition of insubordination. There are also some humorous touches: domestic service has been abolished as degrading, and the President of the Republic has to black his own boots before proceeding to his State duties. He finds that this and other domestic duties interfere with the proper perusal and consideration of State papers. There are many other details for which I must refer you to the book itself, but it appears to me that it presents a very fair picture of what would actually happen if the social democratic revolution were brought within the sphere of practical politics. That such can ever be the case is, I think, highly improbable; it is true that a large section of the Labour Party have adopted it as their programme, but the returns of the Chief Registrar of Friendly Societies shows that the industrial classes have amongst them some four hundred millions of savings and accumulations, and it is very unlikely that they would acquiesce in the absorption of their savings by the State. But it is impossible to strike at one class of property without affecting the whole. Neither is it likely that they would tolerate any such interference as is contemplated in their private lives. The instincts of self-preservation and the love of family life are still, happily, strong with the Englishman.

But there is another section of public opinion from which perhaps the largest body of those who would call themselves "Socialists" is found. These last, for the most part, represent a vague but widespread resentment against the inequalities of

poverty and wealth, and they desire to see a redistribution of property by some means, of which they have hardly thought out the details. They recognise to the full the institution of private property, and are in that sense as individualist as the individualists, and they derive their main support from those who, not having property, want to have it.

Socialism of this kind is that to which the late Sir W. Harcourt referred when he made use of the well-known expression, "We are all Socialists now," and its danger lies mainly in its indefiniteness. It does not accept the underlying principles of State Socialism, whilst it is prepared to accept, by instalments, a large part of its programme under the name of "social reform"—a rather question-begging phrase. Mr Balfour recently defined the distinction between Socialism and social reform. I have not his words by me, but they were to the effect that whilst Socialism aims at the abolition of private property, and the control of the means of production by the State, social reform will have nothing to do with such things, but starts from the basis of the institution of private property. That, however, being once granted (he continues), social reform recognises that it is the duty of the State to levy contributions upon the well-to-do for the benefit of their poorer neighbours. With such a definition, broadly speaking, no one will quarrel. Everyone recognises the necessity of taxation for Poor Law purposes, and for many other purposes connected with the well-being of the community, such as education and the like. But it is not difficult to see that the definition is not a sufficient one for practical purposes, and that it might be so applied as to carry out in practice most of the proposals initiated by the Fabian Society. I think that I shall have no difficulty in showing that this

is really its present tendency. Meanwhile, neither Mr Balfour nor any of those who speak about social reform have clearly defined what they mean by "social reform." It is possible that they have not exactly thought it out in all its bearings themselves. We have, therefore, to judge from the measures that have been actually put forward under that name as to its true significance and tendency, and it is plain that they have, without exception, been initiated and inspired by the Socialist organisations. It is of Socialist measures put forward in the name of "social reform" by those who repudiate the name of Socialism that I desire to speak as "the new Socialism."

First and most important of these, because it affects the whole population of working age, is the recognition of the "right to work," which is implied by the "Unemployed Workmen Act." It was, of course, denied by its authors that the Act contained any such implication, and Mr Gerald Balfour, in proposing it, urged that it was so safeguarded by all sorts of restrictions and limitations that no such danger was to be apprehended. Public money was not to be used except for machinery, and even for that it was limited to a penny rate. Poor Law relief was to disqualify, and the benefit of the Act was to be confined by investigation to a strictly limited section of the higher class of workmen "exceptionally out of work." The opponents of the Act pointed out that if once the principle of State-provided work were recognised the safeguards would be bound to go; that all experience had proved that it was ruinous for the State to attempt to provide work outside of that demanded by the economic needs of the community; that when the State stepped in voluntary subscriptions would disappear, and that real and effective discrimination by public bodies was an impossibility. However,

they hardly obtained a hearing, and the Act was passed almost unanimously by a House of Commons which would certainly repudiate the name of "Socialist." The Labour Party were more clear-sighted. Mr Will Crooks at once raised a pæan of triumph because "the principle had been recognised." And now, after two years' experience, what do we find? My knowledge is chiefly confined to London, but there the anticipations of the opponents of the Act have been realised almost to the letter. Voluntary subscriptions have disappeared and an Exchequer grant has been a matter of necessity. Investigation has proved almost a farce owing to the different standards of the Distress Committees. The benefits of the Act, if doles of work can be called benefits, have gone mainly to the casual labourer. The practical impossibility of finding work which "will not compete with the work of those already in employment" has been proved up to the hilt. Of some 29,000 registered last year, only 3500 obtained temporary work, and a large proportion of the remainder were kept hanging about the offices of Distress Committees waiting for work which it was obvious *ab initio* that they could never get, and meanwhile were losing their places in the ordinary labour market. Some of the work, *e.g.* the laying out of golf courses and the formation of artificial lakes, has been unnecessary and of doubtful economic value, but much of it has been work which must eventually have been done by the labourer in the open market, who has therefore been *pro tanto* the sufferer. It has been done at a heavy loss varying from 25 to 75 per cent. The London County Council have valued the work done for them at one-fifth the value of that done by the ordinary unskilled labourer. Meanwhile the expenditure on machinery and officialism has been very

heavy.¹ London has also made an experiment in the direction of the "reclamation of foreshores," of which we hear so much as a remedy for unemployment. Two hundred acres of land at Fambridge in Essex have been—rather doubtfully—reclaimed at a cost of £25,000, and the land is now valued at £800. Such has been the experience, after two years' working, of this flirtation with the main tenet of the Socialist creed, that it is the duty of the State to find work for everyone who is able and willing to do it. It has done little or nothing to mitigate distress from want of employment. On the contrary, the interference with the mobility of labour and the great expectations that have been aroused have rendered the position more critical than ever before. And I venture to prophesy that the longer we persist in a mistaken policy, the greater will be the extent of the evil.

The next plank in the Socialist programme which has been accepted by both political parties is the proposal for Old Age Pensions. Here, again, non-Socialist Parliaments have again and again accepted the principle as a measure of "social reform." As to this, we have to recall the fact that the question has been considered again and again by Commissions or Committees of experts who have in all cases decided against them, and that the only support has come from Committees composed exclusively of politicians. The main line of cleavage is between those who believe that the true line of social progress is to be found in the gradual improvement of the payment of labour and in the prudence and self-control of the working-classes themselves, and those who believe that such

¹ The expenditure on establishment charges in London from Nov. 1906 to June 1907 was £11,090, or 7s. 4d. per case registered, 9s. 6d. per case investigated, £3, 2s. 6d. per case provided with temporary work.

a consummation is impossible and that the burden of the maintenance of the aged poor must rest with the State.

Here again, if you once accept the principle, there is no limit to its extension ; invalidity is a far more real claim to our sympathy even than old age, which comes to all, and for which there is a whole lifetime to prepare, and if we are to pension the aged we must also pension those who are incapacitated for labour from whatever cause : already in Germany the invalidity claims have far outstripped the old age claims. The fixing of any age is unscientific ; some are "too old at forty," others capable of good work long after they are sixty or even sixty-five. The opponents of old age pensions believe that they would act in supplementation of wages, and so indefinitely postpone the true solution of the problem of provision for old age, and that they would be detrimental to thrift, because they would impose upon the thrifty the burden of the maintenance of the unthrifty. Finally, they know that the expectations which have been aroused have already had a disastrous effect upon the efforts that the working classes are themselves making through the great friendly societies and similar organisations, to provide against old age. At the time when old age pensions were first brought by Mr Chamberlain within the field of practical politics, there had been steady progress in this direction. For example, in 1871 there were twenty-one paupers in every hundred of the population over sixty, in 1891 there were only thirteen, and there was every reason to hope that this improvement might have continued. In the words of Lord Rothschild's Committee in 1898—"We desire to refer to one consideration which the course of our inquiry has strongly impressed upon us. It is that a large and

increasing number of the industrial population do already, by prudence, self-reliance, and self-denial, make their old age independent and respected. We entertain a strong hope that the improvement which is constantly taking place in the financial and moral conditions of labour will do much to deprive the problem we have had to consider of the importance now attaching to it."

The next Socialist proposal which has obtained a recognition in principle from the "new Socialism" of a non-Socialist Parliament, has been that of the State maintenance of children. In this we may observe the gradual evolution that has taken place. First of all, the children were to be educated compulsorily; then they were to be educated free—the school pence were remitted, and it was argued that they would go to the better maintenance of the children. In time this argument was forgotten, and for many years past there has been increasing pressure for the State feeding of children upon the ground that you compel them to be educated, and that this carries with it the duty of feeding them also. The pressure has now culminated in the passing of the Provision of Meals Act of last year. Like all similar measures it is tentative, and education authorities have the option of raising a rate or dealing with the question by voluntary means. For the moment a considerable number of these bodies have adopted the latter alternative, but it is not difficult to see that it will be impossible to maintain this policy for long. Already there is almost intolerable pressure upon local bodies to throw the cost upon the rates: Socialist organisations are multiplying deputations upon the subject, and Socialist or quasi-Socialist members of the bodies themselves are not allowing the matter to rest. As usual, the difficulty of raising voluntary subscriptions increases when the rates are in the

background. Meanwhile Socialist managers of schools are doing their utmost to magnify the numbers of the children reported to be "underfed," and are straining every nerve to bring about a breakdown of the voluntary system. But of course much wider issues are involved; the question of the feeding of the children is really a minor one. The question of clothing, proper housing, and medical attendance is of more than equal importance. Meanwhile we have taken the first step upon an inclined plane leading towards the acceptance of the full Socialist demand for the State maintenance of children.

So much for these developments of the "new Socialism" which have already been or are about to be realised. We have now to consider the relation of the old Poor Law to the new Socialism. I am aware, of course, that the old Poor Law has been frequently discussed at these Conferences, and that there is always some impatience when it is mentioned. When I referred to it at a recent Conference there was a general cry, "Oh, we have heard all that before," and one of my critics facetiously said, "As it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be," etc. Well, I submit that criticism of that kind is not real criticism at all. These critics have one thing in common, namely, that though they denounce your arguments as obsolete they never attempt to answer them. The only course, then, is to repeat them until we either get an answer or become convinced that there is no answer. The plain fact is that the old Poor Law and the new Socialism are for all practical purposes one and the same.

The first purpose of the old Poor Law was that of setting the able-bodied to work, and the new Socialism has just accepted a similar responsibility. For some 230 years the old Poor Law was engaged

in trying to solve the problem of "finding work for the unemployed." At the time of its enactment, and for many years afterwards, the main industry of the country was that of spinning and weaving, and naturally the provision of artificial employment usually took that form. Hundreds of schemes were devised "for the better employment of the poor," and hundreds of experiments made during these 230 years. The commonest was that of providing parish "stocks," that is to say, stocks of flax, wool, hemp, etc., to be worked up by the poor. The Overseers, whose duty it was to do this, answered to the Distress Committees of our day. These schemes uniformly failed, and the author of "Robinson Crusoe" pointed out, as far back as 1704, that if the State gives work to one man it takes it away from another, and that the effect of such employment is merely "to transpose our manufactures and confound our trade; for every skein of worsted spun in a workhouse there must be a skein the less spun by some poor family who spun it before; to set poor people to work upon the same thing that other poor people are employed upon is giving to one what you take away from another, putting a vagabond in the honest man's employment." So, too, under the new Socialism, most of us must know cases in which the ordinary workman has been thrown out of employment because the work has been given to the unemployed. Most of the work done by the unemployed of London in the parks and elsewhere at a heavy loss would otherwise have been done economically and well by the ordinary workman in the open market. I am afraid that the effect has been too often that of putting a vagabond in an honest man's employment. Under the old Poor Law, again, things came to such a pass that at last no one could get employment at all except through the parish, and it seems

likely that the same will soon be the case in the twentieth century under the new Socialism. Finally, under "Gilbert's Act," it was provided that every one capable of work should be provided with work at or near his own home. The system of employment by parish stocks broke down early in the day, and towards the end of the eighteenth and in the beginning of the nineteenth century the main employment given was in work upon the roads or parish farms, or by hiring out labourers to farmers on the "roundsman system." Local Authorities were frequently reduced to such straits as putting men to stand in the parish pound for so many hours, or answering their names at a roll call in return for parish pay. The practical impossibility of finding economic work which will not interfere with the work of those already in employment, will soon reduce us to similar straits under the new Socialism.

The second great function of the Elizabethan Poor Law was the relief of the impotent, and under it practically every poor person had an old age pension. Those who have studied the old parish books will tell you that in most parts of England almost the whole labouring population — young, middle-aged, and old — were upon the rates, and outdoor relief was universal. There is no difference, but in name, between old age pensions and outdoor relief, except that old age pensions are more attractive, because they are on a higher scale and are free from the name of pauperism.

With regard to the third point, the maintenance of children, under what was known as the "Speenhamland Act," from 1s. 6d. to 2s. 6d. a week, according to the price of the quartern loaf, was allowed to practically any labourer who chose to apply for it in respect of each child, and the State or rate (for it is the same thing) maintenance of children was almost universal.

So, then, we see that the new Socialism, so far as it has gone at present, is carrying us back in the direction of the old Poor Law, which is the one great Socialist measure which has been enacted in this country. We all know its history, and that of the ruin to which it led. Then came the new Poor Law, which laid it down that the position of the pauper should be less eligible than that of the independent labourer. Now once more we are making it more eligible to be a pauper, but the recipient of State relief is no longer to be called by that name. Thoughtful people who have studied the question, both in the past and the present, are, not unnaturally, alarmed at the outlook. It is true that we call things by grander names nowadays than they used to a hundred years ago. The word pauperism offends our ears, and much of what is really the purest materialism masquerades under the name of "idealism." Some here may think that I have gone outside the scope of a Poor Law Conference, but these are really the vital issues which are before the country, and I do not think that Guardians can afford to ignore them because it pleases people to make believe that they are not Poor Law questions. The great need of the moment is to clear the issues, and to call things by their right names.

Let me, then, recapitulate shortly the main points that I wish to place before you. First of all, public opinion upon these questions is divided roughly into three heads. We have the section of "Individualist" opinion, as it is called, which holds that the solution of the social problem is to be found in the strengthening of the individual, and that this must be an essential condition of true social reform, and that everything else leads to social disorganisation. At the other extreme we have the academic Socialist opinion; this again

we can respect ; it knows its own mind, and is very clear and definite as to its objects, and whatever we may think as to the practicability of these objects it has a logical and well-defined social policy. Between these two extremes, there is that large loose and fluctuating body of public opinion, which, though it is certainly not Socialist at heart in the true sense of the word, yet derives its chief inspiration from the academic Socialists, and is prepared to accept a large part of their programme. It is actuated by various motives, some of which are purely philanthropic, others political. It has not any very definite programme, and has not thought out the matter very clearly, neither have its adherents considered the logical consequences of measures hastily adopted by them. For example, it was probably something of a shock to the authors of the Unemployed Workmen Act to hear it cited the other day by Mr Ramsay Macdonald as the basis of his "Right to Work" Bill. Yet Mr Ramsay Macdonald was undoubtedly justified in his assumption. Similarly, Mr Chamberlain's scheme for contributing old age pensions by way of deferred annuity has developed into a scheme for universal non-contributory pensions, and the Provision of Meals Act is clearly another step in the direction of the State maintenance of children. This body of opinion, if indeed it deserves the name of opinion, is most heterogeneous in composition. It includes a vast number of people sincerely anxious to improve social conditions, but who have had no practical experience of social work, and have no clear idea as to how to set about it. It includes many who are tossed to and fro between the waves of sense and sensibility, and whose opinions are, to use the words of an old writer, "milde, mungrel, and ambiguous." It includes many political oppor-

tunists, and many who have pledged themselves in advance to opinions from which they are unwilling to recede. These last may be reminded that "for a man to correct himself, and when he is most in earnest to leave an ill opinion, are most rare, noble, and philosophical conditions," and again, that he who persists in an opinion after he has lost his faith in it "loveth himself better than the truth." These, then, are the three main divisions of public opinion: I believe that the middle position, which is that of the "new Socialism," is an untenable one, and that sooner or later its supporters must range themselves definitely on the one side or the other.

I have chosen to speak to you upon this subject because it appears to me to be the main issue now before the country, and one upon which Poor Law Guardians, who have wide experience and training, and full knowledge of the evils of pauperism, are better qualified to form an opinion than any others. The details of administration sink into absolute insignificance in comparison. Many suggestions are being made now for Poor Law reform; in my opinion, they most of them amount to little more than a shuffling of the cards. The main question is not by whom the Poor Law is to be administered, but upon what principles it is to be administered, and sooner or later the country will have to make up its mind upon the subject. So far, all that has been done has been to evade the question by putting forward measures which are really Poor Law measures, and calling them something else. This has been the sole result, up to the present, of the new Socialism, which, as I have tried to show, has been carrying us back faster and faster towards the old Poor Law, and which contains within it the seeds of irretrievable national disaster.

DEMOCRACY AND LOCAL ELECTIONS

FOR some time past there has been a growing uneasiness in the minds of many observers with regard to the question of our system of local government. On the one hand there are widespread complaints of municipal mismanagement and extravagance, on the other a constant demand for the conferring of greater powers and responsibilities upon municipal bodies. Often, indeed, the very people who are loudest in their complaints of incompetence are most insistent in demanding further powers for the bodies they denounce. Meanwhile enterprise of all kinds, both civic and philanthropic, is passing more and more out of the hands of individual citizens into those of public bodies "elected by the people." The magnitude of the powers now exercised by these bodies, and the fact that there appears to be no prospective limit to their activity, render it imperative that we should scan closely the operation of the system under which they are appointed and ask ourselves whether it works as it is intended to work, and whether we are securing under it the administrators best fitted for functions which concern the future of the country more closely than any question of foreign policy or imperial extension.

The nature and constitution of municipal bodies and the methods of their appointment were finally settled and prescribed by the Local Government Act of 1894. The main object of that Act was, as

is well known, to carry the democratic principle to its extreme limits in local elections. Qualifications both for candidates and voters were swept away—as also was the principle of nomination by the Local Government Board. The last trace of plural voting was effaced, and the principle that taxation and representation go together finally discarded. It was urged that the measure would widen and intensify the interest in local affairs, that with greater power there would come greater responsibility, and that thenceforward every citizen would be awakened to an intelligent interest in local government and to a full sense of its importance. The average citizen who had up to that time displayed a persistent disregard for the affairs of his town or parish was to be “educated” out of his apathy by a sense of responsibility. It was suggested at the time that the administration of the Poor Law was too difficult and complex a subject for the turmoil of the hustings. The answer was that the electorate would soon learn all that it was necessary to learn about the Poor Law, and would exercise their suffrages with discretion and intelligence. More than ten years have gone by. The Act has had a fair trial, and it is time to inquire how it has worked, and whether in fact it has had, or appears in the fair way to obtain, the results that were anticipated by its authors.

An attempt is made in this article to bring these questions to some sort of preliminary test by an inquiry with regard to a single local election in a single place—the election, namely, of Boards of Guardians in London, which took place in 1904. A fuller inquiry is no doubt very desirable, but a single election in a great town may be fairly taken as a test of the conditions attending similar elections in other great centres of population. Moreover, a Poor Law election has a special significance because

the Poor Law is a branch of local administration which has a sinister history behind it, and which demands special qualifications and capabilities from those who undertake it. It becomes essential to inquire whether its administrators possess these qualifications, and whether the electorate itself is becoming better qualified to judge as to those who will serve it best.

The method adopted has been as follows. Information has been collected from all parts of London with regard to the election in question, including statistics as to the polls in each union, election addresses of candidates, local newspapers, and other contemporary expressions of opinion. The information is not absolutely complete, because in some cases it was found impossible to obtain the particulars asked for, even within a short time of the election, which is rather a significant sign of the ephemeral nature of the interest awakened. However, a large amount of matter has, through the kindness of various correspondents, been brought together, and it is hoped that it may be considered of sufficient importance to establish the necessity of further inquiry upon some of the points indicated.

First of all, with regard to the polls, statistics were obtained as to the number of wards in each union contested or uncontested. When there were contests figures were asked for as to the number of voters upon the register and as to the number of those who actually voted. A detailed table of the results will be found at the end of this article, but the following is a summary.

Information was furnished from twenty-seven out of thirty-one unions. In these twenty-seven unions there were in all 236 wards. Of these 122 were polled; 115, or nearly half, remained unpolled. In two of the twenty-seven unions there were no contests; in three, though there were contests, it proved

impossible to obtain the actual figures. In the remaining twenty-two unions, out of 296,725 electors upon the register in the contested wards, 69,385 voted, or rather less than one-quarter. We may take it therefore that, in the whole metropolis, in round figures, half the wards were polled, and that in that half a quarter of the electorate only made use of their votes.

These figures, however, do not represent the whole truth. It is, of course, well known to everyone who has been concerned in local elections that those immediately interested spare no effort to secure the return of themselves and their friends. The support of political and other associations is enlisted. Election Committees and bands of canvassers are organised. No means that human ingenuity can devise are left untried in order to induce people to vote. In Lambeth, according to a local paper, "seven out of eight of the voters were whipped to the poll by party organisations." In Islington it was "a matter of the candidates drumming up such of their private friends and neighbours as would go outside their doors to oblige them." In Lewisham "what excitement there was was limited to the candidates and their friends." The same story comes from all parts of London. In Marylebone "little enthusiasm"; in Shoreditch "deadening lack of interest"; in Camberwell "colossal apathy"; and so elsewhere. But it is hardly necessary to elaborate the point. The figures speak for themselves. In the individual polls it is rare indeed to find one which runs into four figures, though the voters upon the register in the wards are usually from 3000 to 5000. Local elections have been "democratised," but the democracy, after many years' trial, still stands aloof. What voting there is, is organised by the efforts of candidates themselves. There is no spontaneous interest.

A letter in the "Clapham Observer" (16th April 1904) analyses the voting in the huge union of Wandsworth, containing a population of more than 400,000, and points a moral. The writer states that, in the three years of office of the outgoing Board, a total of £642,620, showing an increase of twenty-seven per cent. in the three years, "had been spent by the Guardians." He goes on to say that, at the three elections out of twenty-four wards only eight polled. "The total number of voters in the union is 73,340; of these only 5086 voted, or not quite seven per cent. In the eight wards contested only 21.66 per cent., or not one-quarter of the ratepayers, took the trouble of voting. Upon whom does the blame rest if the expense of Poor Law administration goes up by leaps and bounds?"

What, then, is the cause of this? The answer probably is that there are many contributory causes, but that the main cause is the little credit which local government enjoys in popular estimation. The average citizen looks on it with something like contempt: he will neither take part in it himself nor will he trouble himself to vote, or even to learn anything about it. He has a vague idea that Guardians are "Bumbles," and borough councillors not much better. He has no clear ideas as to the functions of a multiplicity of local bodies, and he resents the frequency of elections. This is the case with the "well-to-do" class of voter; the poorer voter, in addition, has the grievance that he has been repeatedly promised all sorts of benefits without any result, and his constant dictum is that "one lot is as bad as the other, and that he won't vote at all." The discredit into which local government has fallen affects unfavourably the class of candidates who offer themselves for election. The average citizen sees in it no outlet for honourable

ambition. He is, as a rule, especially in the poorer parts of London, fully occupied with his own business, and there is little temptation to him to sacrifice any part of his time to work which brings with it little credit and not seldom a considerable share of blame. The absence of candidates of some standing and position reacts unfavourably upon the electorate, who, as a rule, know little of those who offer themselves, and feel no enthusiasm for them. The position with regard to Poor Law administration is a particularly difficult one. The road to popularity does not lie through the careful expenditure of public money. The Press and many public men lose no opportunity of denouncing "bumbledom," and the opprobrium often falls upon those who deserve it least.

The result of all this is that the work too often falls into the hands of those who have "axes to grind," and that in the absence of suitable candidates the electorate is at the mercy of anyone who will come forward, and that scandals of all kinds are of frequent occurrence. In a recent number of the "Poor Law Officers' Journal" it is reported that at a single sitting of a certain metropolitan Board of Guardians this year, no less than two sons of Guardians were appointed to paid offices under the Board, in spite of the protest of a minority. Anyone who is behind the scenes will know that this is no isolated occurrence. But, further, a seat upon a local Board is frequently the first step to an office under that Board. The present writer is aware of a case in which at least three medical officers have obtained appointments under a certain Board, having first been "elected by the people." The local government papers report frequently "the resignation of a Guardian" in order to take up a registrarship

or even the post of relieving officer: people who do these things will not of course stop short at other doubtful practices. All this naturally tends to bring local government into deserved disrepute, and the whole system moves in a vicious circle; the discredit into which it has fallen becoming the chief obstacle to improvement. Meanwhile those who are responsible for these practices are frequently the very men who appear before the public at election time as the most ardent advocates of humanity, the foremost champions of the cause of the poor.

It cannot be a matter for wonder that the electorate, who over a succession of years have watched the sequence of promise and performance, should regard the situation with something more akin to dislike than indifference, and should abstain from taking any part in electing those whom they have learned to distrust.

The fact that local elections are decided by so small a number of votes places the control in the hands of political clubs and associations, and other combinations which may happen to be influential for the moment in any district. Candidates are elected because they are Conservatives, or because they are Liberals, or because they are Churchmen, or because they are Nonconformists. In Brixton, for instance, "four wards were swept by the Nonconformist churches." In Chelsea and other places the political associations controlled the election. In some places labour organisations are all-powerful. This was the case in Battersea and Hackney. But the smallness of the polls in every part of London precludes the idea that the results were really representative of public opinion, or that they really indicated "the voice of the people." When the associations take no part in these elections it is hardly too

much to say that there is no voting at all. The present writer was upon one occasion returned for a ward containing 5000 voters at a bye-election. He received about 230 votes ; his opponent received about 50.

It has been said that Poor Law elections are a specially crucial test of local government, because administrators of the Poor Law require special qualifications of knowledge and intelligence. It may be added that they differ from other municipal authorities in that they deal directly with human beings, rather than with things, and that human nature is a dangerous plaything for amateurs. In order to gauge to some extent the existence of these qualifications in those who came forward as candidates, a large number of election addresses have been gathered and examined. The result is extremely disappointing. The addresses which exhibit any knowledge of Poor Law history or principles are insignificant in number. The majority are studiously vague. "Economy and efficiency," "humanity and kind treatment of the poor" are the most frequent watchwords. Or they appeal for support on the ground of "long residence" or for other personal reasons. Where they descend to particulars there is one feature that is common to almost all of them, namely, the advocacy of outdoor relief "to prevent expenditure upon bricks and mortar and upon large and costly buildings"; "to prevent the breaking-up of homes"; "to keep the poor by their own firesides." From one union comes a pictorial address: "(1) United and happy—outdoor relief; (2) Parted and pauperised—no outdoor relief." The first is a representation of an old couple sitting by the fire drinking tea; the second of a similar couple bidding good-bye to one another at the workhouse door. Another complains of

“the niggerly [*sic*] manner in which outdoor relief is granted.” Generally speaking, that is the line taken by the great majority of addresses which deal specifically with any question of administration, and it may be added that addresses of the same nature have done duty at Poor Law elections for many generations. No one apparently stops to ask why it is that though outdoor relief has of late years been largely on the increase in all but an infinitesimal number of unions, expenditure upon “bricks and mortar” has tended to increase even faster. No one has asked why it is that the largest increase of indoor expenditure has taken place precisely in those unions which have expended most upon outdoor relief, or why it is that more “homes are broken up” in outdoor unions than in indoor ones. Yet as to the facts there can be no doubt. Meanwhile the advocacy of outdoor relief is, and always must be, popular, and is of course especially welcome to those associations which control the elections, and which themselves largely depend for their existence upon popularity. Here and there we find an address of a different quality. One from Paddington contains a quotation from an Annual Report of the Local Government Board to the effect that “outdoor relief has never sensibly reduced indoor relief.” A very outspoken one from St Pancras defines the object of the Poor Law as being “the diminution of the curse of pauperism, and the raising of the condition of the poor.” The writer failed to be elected. One from Shoreditch speaks of the “difficult and complicated question of outdoor relief,” one or two more of the necessity of “discrimination,” but they are very guarded in their utterances, and, speaking generally, the public is not likely to derive much enlightenment upon Poor Law questions from the addresses of

the candidates, and so far as these are concerned the "education" of the electorate does not appear likely to progress apace.

There are also some addresses of an extremist kind. The increasing intervention of the labour party in local elections has been already mentioned. In at least two unions they have an official programme and manifesto containing a long list of proposed "reforms," many of which would be considered outside the province of the Poor Law. Judging from that programme, it would appear that they look to the Poor Law for the solution of the problem of poverty, and we have the ominous spectacle of a "labour" party clamouring for relief from the rates.

But there are other extremists besides those of the labour party. It is remarkable that in those unions in which outdoor relief has been carried to its greatest lengths the cry for its extension is the most persistent. In Camberwell, for instance, the out-relief expenditure is some £30,000 a year, and yet we find the following in one of the addresses from that union:—

"The people are being driven into the work-houses at enormous cost, where outdoor relief at one quarter the cost is being viciously refused . . . the money is infamously dragged from the poor and lavishly squandered upon the rich. One big butcher got a contract for nearly £8000 [*sic*] of meat, for one six months. If outdoor relief were intelligently given, thousands of aged workhouse inmates could live at home with their grown-up sons and daughters, and the little butchers would sell more meat, and we should all be paying less rates, and everybody would benefit." This sounds like an echo from some far-off fiscal platform. Another address from the same union also advocates more outdoor relief: "habitual pauperism," it

contends, "is encouraged by indoor relief." In Poplar, Hackney, Islington, and other unions in which the expenditure upon outdoor relief is already enormous, there is a similar demand upon all sides for its extension.

Another somewhat singular address comes from Camberwell. It purports to emanate, not from the candidates themselves, but from "the inmates of the Gordon Road workhouse" who are "gratified to know that Mr W. H—— is contesting the ward against Miss J——. The aged inmates (rather ungallantly) wish him every success. Mr J—— is also an exceedingly able young man. Nunhead will do well to elect them." This address has some significance as marking the fast disappearing margin that divides the administrators of the Poor Law from the recipients of poor relief. It does not stand alone in this respect. Not long ago in another workhouse a memorial was extensively signed by the inmates in favour of the election of certain candidates, and it is becoming plain that the recipients of relief are occupying more and more a position to dictate the terms of their own relief. The writer was concerned a few years ago in an election in which the contest turned upon the out-relief question. The out-relief party won. At the first relief meeting of the newly elected Board applicants appeared before the Board with the election addresses of the out-relief party in their hands, which they flourished in the face of the Guardians present.

Passing from the consideration of the election addresses to other features of the election in question, one point that appears to be novel is the number of ex-officers of Guardians, some of them actually in receipt of retiring allowance from their Boards, who came forward as candidates for election. There were several of these in Lambeth, and at

least one was elected. In Fulham, Bethnal Green, and probably other unions there were ex-officers amongst the candidates. The question of their eligibility or otherwise was put before the Local Government Board, who declined to give an opinion. The position is, however, a somewhat difficult one. The best qualified officers are not, as a rule, those who are the first to be retired, and it may happen that an officer who has been retired for incompetence or other reasons may return to the control of the very institutions which he has been considered unfit to manage, and all sorts of personal friction may be the result. In any case, he may be put into the somewhat invidious position of signing cheques for his own salary.

It is not, of course, intended to suggest in what has been said that none of those who come forward at these elections are qualified for the position. On the contrary, there are many who are fully qualified in every way, and are doing excellent service. The general standard, however, is not a high one, and they work as a rule under extreme difficulties. They have, it is true, often an influence disproportionate to their numbers, but the advocacy of economic doctrines is unpalatable to the caucuses, and their position is at all times precarious. They find considerable difficulty in obtaining election; every three years they are liable to be unseated, and many of them have met with that fate. They are as a rule elected in spite of their opinions rather than because of them. Their appearance is accidental, and in spite of the system rather than because of it.

Another difficulty that they encounter is in the changed action of the Local Government Board. There was a time when they could have looked to it for support in the maintenance of principles which the Board itself has repeatedly recognised. Now

the circulars and letters of the Local Government Board are thrown in their teeth at every turn. They have succeeded after a struggle in reducing extravagant expenditure upon outdoor relief. The Local Government Board issues a circular commending it to Guardians. They endeavour to maintain some sort of discipline and regulation in workhouse management. The Local Government Board issues circulars enjoining relaxation and indulgences. Since Mr Goschen's circular of 1869, the central Board has in fact abdicated its old controlling function. The inspectors, in London at least, show little or no sign of official disapproval of laxity of administration. This has changed to some extent since Mr John Burns succeeded to the Presidency of the Local Government Board.

To sum up, then, if we may judge from the analogy of the election in question, there is no reality in our system of popular representation in local government. We hear the voice of political clubs and coteries, of churches and chapels, and of late especially the voice of a small but well-organised socialist party. The voice of the people is conspicuously silent: about one-eighth of the electorate only voted, and that under great pressure. The extreme subdivision of local administration, involving a wearisome multiplicity of elections, and obscuring the broader issues to the public mind, is to a great extent responsible for the discredit into which it has fallen. There is little inducement to the more capable citizens to offer themselves for election, and little inducement to the average elector to record his vote. The system has got into a rut out of which it is essential that it should be extricated.

It is sometimes urged that the remedy will come automatically: that the increase of rates will eventually bring about its own cure. This of

course may be true, but the process is a slow one, and meanwhile the position may become irremediable. The increase of rates is disguised to the great majority of the electors. The working classes complain, it is true, of the increase of their rents, but they are for the most part compound householders, who do not pay their rates direct, and they ascribe the increase of their rents exclusively to "grasping landlords." Almost the only direct ratepayers in poor districts are the great firms and corporations and a percentage of the shopkeepers, but they have scarcely any voice in the matter, and are looked upon in many cases as legitimate objects of plunder. It must not be forgotten that of late years the socialist party has been gradually acquiring more and more power in these local elections. In some places they control them almost exclusively. They make it no secret that it is their object to bring about a silent revolution through municipal action, and subordinate all other considerations to that end. Not only the Poor Law, but borough councils and education committees are their field of action. So long as this is the case we may be sure that no considerations of economy will be allowed to have any weight, not at all events till it may be too late. We have seen also that the line of demarcation between those who pay the rates and those who receive them is fast disappearing, that inmates of workhouses are now proposing to select the managers of the workhouses, and that the main issue put before electors in poor districts is that of outdoor relief. Already there is strong pressure for the removal of the disfranchisement of paupers, and a forward move in that direction has been given by the Unemployed Workmen Act, which is a standing invitation to the electors in poor districts to vote for those who will make work for the unemployed outside the Poor Law. In fact,

the danger of a corrupt motive in local elections is becoming more and more evident on every side.

We have for a long time been drifting in these matters. It is evident that we cannot continue to do so much longer. We are near the parting of the ways, and must make up our minds whether we are to accept the position of the socialists or whether we are to revert to the older ideas as to the functions of local bodies. The decision rests with that great body of public opinion which has till now remained silent.

Elections of Guardians in 1904.

Name of Union.	Wards uncon- tested.	Wards con- tested.	Number on register in contested wards.	Number who voted.	Per- centage.
Kensington . . .	5	3	10,001	2,462	24
Paddington . . .	5	3	11,478	1,405	13
Fulham . . .	4	4	11,275	2,788	25
Hammersmith . . .	6	1	2,721	714	26
Chelsea . . .	0	5	12,029	2,958	24
St George's Hanover Sq.	5	2	8,568	1,646	19
Marylebone . . .	6	3	no particulars		...
Hampstead . . .	5	2	3,613	552	15
St Pancras . . .	5	3	14,510	2,843	20
Islington . . .	5	6	27,856	3,409	12
Hackney . . .	12	3	13,132	2,684	20
St Giles . . .	5	0	...	...	...
Westminster . . .	1	4	4,734	1,355	29
Strand . . .	4	1	1,618	356	22
Holborn . . .	...	...	no particulars		...
City . . .	...	...	no particulars		...
Shoreditch . . .	6	7	16,083	4,198	26
Bethnal Green . . .	1	3	14,453	3,376	23
Whitechapel . . .	5	3	2,592	899	35
St George's, E. . .	0	2	3,659	(abt.) 1,800	50
Poplar . . .	6	8	no particulars		...
Stepney . . .	5	0	...	...	...
Mile End . . .	0	6	no particulars		...
St Saviour's . . .	4	6	20,746	3,945	19
Bermondsey . . .	1	10	17,507	6,425	36
Lambeth . . .	0	9	48,781	7,512	15
Wandsworth . . .	16	8	33,465	5,086	15
Camberwell . . .	8	12	27,456	12,953	47
Greenwich . . .	...	...	no particulars		...
Lewisham . . .	0	8	22,293	4,825	21
Woolwich . . .	...	...	no particulars		...
Total . . .	115	122	296,725	69,385	...

THE REPORTS OF THE POOR LAW COMMISSIONS OF 1834 AND 1909

THE issue of the Report of the Royal Commission of 1909 marks a new stage in the three hundred years' history of the English Poor Law. That of the first two hundred years was brought to a close by the Royal Commission of 1834. The present Report brings the question up to date in the light of modern developments, both social and industrial.

For nearly eighty years all our Poor Law administration has been, in theory at least, based upon the Report of 1834. That Report has been the text-book—one may almost say the classic—of students of the Poor Law, not only in this country, but in Europe and across the Atlantic. It is, therefore, of special interest now to inquire whether that Report has been superseded by that of 1909; whether its conclusions have been tried and found wanting, and what is the general attitude of the Commissioners of 1909 towards the verdict of their predecessors. A discussion of the question in this aspect will serve, perhaps better than anything else, to illustrate the difference of principle underlying the Majority and Minority Reports of the Commissioners.

There appears to be the very general misunderstanding as to what these differences are. It is urged, for example, that because the two Reports agree upon points of detail in recommending or

deprecating certain things, because they would both abolish Boards of Guardians and mixed work-houses, because they both advocate labour exchanges, labour colonies, and, though in different ways, workmen's insurance, that there is, therefore, no very fundamental difference between them. Thus Mr Russell Wakefield, in a short speech to the Central Unemployed Body, recently expressed the opinion that "there is no necessary antagonism between the two Reports." An article in the "Athenæum" expresses the same opinion. In an admirable "Synopsis" issued by Messrs Knight, the well-known publishers, it is stated that the "root difference" between the two Reports is that the Minority Report divides necessitous persons into non-able-bodied and able-bodied, and deals with them by separate methods, whilst the Majority makes no such distinction, and it is plain that the author has very imperfectly grasped the fundamental divergence between the two Reports. What, then, is this "root difference"?

In the first place, the Minority Report definitely breaks with all tradition, and dissociates itself from the Report of 1834. Its authors are industriously circulating the suggestion that the Majority Report does the same. They have said that the Majority do not render "even lip service" to the conclusions of their predecessors. It will not be difficult to show that such statements are contrary to the facts.

The main principle adopted by the Majority Report, in comparison with which all others sink into insignificance, is that the basis of all Poor Law legislation should be to "foster the instincts of independence and self-maintenance amongst those assisted," and thereafter, upon almost every page, we find some reference to this principle, which is, of course, a simple restatement of the

principles of 1834. Moreover, almost every section of the Report, except those dealing with entirely new matter, is prefaced by a recital of the views of the 1834 Report, these views being treated as almost axiomatic. In many cases when the Commissioners propose a new departure, they take pains to show that it was either the original intention or the natural corollary of the old Report. For example, classification *by* workhouses instead of *in* workhouses was, they contend, the original intention in 1834, though it was abandoned in 1840. So, again, their proposals for bringing voluntary charity into line with the Poor Law are the natural development of the opinions of the older Commission. We may go further, and say that their recommendation for the abolition of Boards of Guardians is a reversion to the views of some of those who were mainly responsible for the Report of 1834. Sir Edwin Chadwick was never in favour of placing the administration of the Poor Law in the hands of casually elected bodies, because he said "there is no security for qualifications of which a high degree of speciality is needed for a very difficult service." When the Government of the day refused to listen to him, he prophesied that the lessons of 1834 would have to be learnt over again, and that is the present position. The Majority Report accepts the doctrine of "less eligibility" again and again in scattered sentences, though it is to be regretted that it does not put it forward as a separate recommendation. Both here and elsewhere its language might have been more clear and definite, and it might have left less to be inferred by that great body of readers who, coming fresh to the subject, will look to it for guidance. It seems, for example, to be a serious omission that in its chapter upon the causes of pauperism it submits the question to

no psychological analysis, and altogether ignores the old and well-recognised distinction between poverty and pauperism. In the words of an old writer:—

“It is of the utmost importance to distinguish between poverty and pauperism, for, by confounding them, poverty is dishonoured and pauperism countenanced. Supply poverty with means and it vanishes; but pauperism is the more confirmed. Poverty is a natural appetite merely wanting food, pauperism a ravenous atrophy which no food can satisfy. Poverty strives to cure itself, pauperism to contaminate others. Poverty often stimulates to exertion, pauperism always paralyses. Poverty is sincere, pauperism an arch-hypocrite. Poverty has naturally a proud spirit, pauperism a base one—now servile, now insolent. Poverty is silent and retiring, pauperism clamorous and imposing: the one grateful, the other the reverse. There is much that is alluring in poverty, but pauperism is altogether hateful. It is delightful to succour the one, and irksome to be taxed for the other. Poverty has the blessing of heaven, as well as of those who relieve it. Pauperism, on the other hand, has nothing in common with the Christian virtues.” Except for a few stray phrases, the Report takes little heed of this side of the question, and it is noteworthy that the chapter upon the “causes of pauperism” is one of the few chapters which ends with no “conclusions.” It approaches the subject of administration as a cause of pauperism, a question which is at the root of the difference of opinion between different schools of thought, half timidly, as “controversial.” But it is for the very purpose of deciding controversial questions that a Royal Commission is appointed.

Elsewhere we find the same indecisiveness. Its characteristic is that it attempts to convey its opinions by suggestion and illustration, and though

those who read between the lines have little difficulty in grasping its meaning, yet it does not speak out in language intelligible to the average citizen who knows little about the Poor Law. In this respect it compares unfavourably with the older Report, which is conspicuous for its masterly analysis of human nature, and for the clearness and preciseness of its conclusions. But at least it cannot be said that the majority, whatever the form in which their Report is presented, and whatever the result of their recommendations, if adopted, might be, have "abandoned the principles of 1834." They hold fast to dispauperisation and the preservation of independence. They accept the principle of "less eligibility" and of destitution as a qualification for public relief. They insist upon the administration of the Poor Law by a separate and homogeneous branch of the public service to be guided by these principles and carried out by a special and independent organisation. It is clear, then, that the Majority Report neither supersedes the 1834 Report nor, though it modifies its methods, does it question its conclusions.

When we come to consider the Minority Report, we are on altogether different ground. That Report definitely and frankly breaks with all tradition, and demands the repeal of all Poor Law legislation subsequent to 43rd Elizabeth. It is, therefore, in so far as it is constructive, a totally new proposal based upon no previous experience. No more, however, need be said about it here as it is dealt with fully in the following chapter.

The problem of pauperism is one which has no place in the economy of the authors of the Minority Report. It hardly receives adequate consideration even from that of the Majority. To understand it in its true light we must turn back to the old Report of 1834, and it is safe to say that that

Report will continue to be read and studied by students of Poor Laws in all countries. However that may be, we have now at least arrived at this—that fourteen out of eighteen Commissioners appointed on account of their special fitness for this inquiry have once again endorsed the wisdom of the principles laid down by their predecessors in the great inquiry of 1834. “Poor Law administration,” they say, “moves in cycles determined in part by varying prosperity and in part by the coming of a new generation which lacks the experience of its predecessors and has ideas of its own. Difficulties recur; old abuses and old evils which were thought to have been buried reassert themselves; the scale of needs and resources is greater, but the problems are fundamentally the same” (Report, Part IV., 238).

THE MINORITY REPORT

A CRITICISM

Introductory.

IT is difficult for the practical Poor Law administrator to criticise a document which regards the whole question from a standpoint so different from his own. What appear to him to be points for criticism would probably appear to the authors of the Minority Report and their friends to be its principal merits. His ideals for the future and his views as to the solution of the problem of poverty are so widely divergent from theirs that it is next to impossible for him to meet them upon common ground or to consider their Report as a Poor Law Report at all. The aim of those who have studied the question in the past has always been to combine assured maintenance for all who are destitute with a maximum of independence, and the goal to which they have looked has been that ultimately the people should "live by their labour." The proposals of the Minority, on the other hand, contemplate with equanimity conditions under which the bulk of the population would be condemned to permanent dependence. They entirely ignore the whole question of pauperisation by the Poor Law, of which we have had, and still have, such bitter experience in this country—a question which appears to most Poor Law administrators to be of vital importance. Or perhaps it would be

more accurate to say that they profess to be able to cure pauperism by making everyone a pauper. It is plain that the authors of the Report have had no experience of pauperism in the concrete or of practical administration.

The following imperfect analysis will try to show first that the Report is a Socialist document advocating, with but little disguise, "universal provision" by the State of the necessities of life. It will naturally gain the support of Socialists—indeed the Socialist organisations are working for it tooth and nail throughout the country—but it will be regarded with suspicion by those who still regard self-provision as the true basis of social welfare. The actual proposals of the Minority will next be examined, and their claim to "scientific precision," and it will be shown how little warrant there is for any such claim. The illusory nature of the safeguards proposed, the probable effect of the delegation of relief administration to bodies elected for other purposes, the manipulation of the labour market with dictatorial power conferred upon superintendents of labour exchanges, the artificial exclusion of certain classes of people from the labour market altogether, the ear-marking of huge sums for the "regularisation" of labour, the possibility of "training" and "honourably maintaining" enormous numbers of adults in public training establishments and of inspiring them wholesale with morale—all these questions will be dealt with in turn and critically examined. Certain inaccuracies in matters of fact and internal inconsistencies will also be indicated as bearing upon the credit of the Report.

Finally, something will be said as to the attitude of the Minority upon a question which will appear to many to be the most important question of all, namely, the question of character or, to use their

own expression, of the "moral factor" in the problem of pauperism. It may be said at once that the general impression left upon the mind by the Report is that it is a gospel of materialism which is certain to defeat its own objects, because character, as the antithesis of pauperism, is essential to material well-being.

The Authorship of the Report and its Sponsors.

The authors of the Minority Report are not disposed to let the grass grow under their feet, and are prosecuting a "crusade against destitution," with the Report as their war-cry. The movement is god-fathered by the distinguished names of Sir John Gorst, Mr Bernard Shaw, Mr H. G. Wells, and Mr Sidney Webb. Mr Sidney Webb, indeed, is something more than a godfather. He is joint-author of the Report, of which he speaks frankly as "our Report." Lord George Hamilton, the Chairman of the Royal Commission, has recently pointed out that Mr and Mrs Sidney Webb have claimed the copyright of this public document, which they could not have done if the other signatories had contributed even a line to its pages. The position is novel. Never before, so far as we know, has the Report of a Royal Commission being written in great part by one who has neither been appointed to the Commission nor has been present at its meetings nor heard the evidence. A question arises whether this will be taken as a precedent in the appointment of future Royal Commissioners, and whether such appointments will be considered to be dual appointments. The preliminary manifesto of the "crusade" appears in the June (1909) number of the Rev. R. J. Campbell's paper, *The Christian Commonwealth*. Mr H. G. Wells gives it his benediction.

"The Minority Report," he says, "expresses that deliberately constructive Socialism which I have always advocated." The views of its other sponsors are equally enthusiastic. Mr Bernard Shaw hails it as the greatest evolutionary discovery since that of Darwin, and it is only reasonable to assume that this approval from leading Socialist authorities shows that its recommendations are socialistic in their tendency.

Its Programme.

The programme of the manifesto is a sweeping one. The Poor Law is to be "abolished," that is to say, it is to disappear as a separate branch of administration. Boards of Guardians are to be swept away and their duties handed over to the various Committees of the County and Borough Councils. At the same time all the safeguards which the experience of three hundred years has led us to adopt are to be put on one side. The position of the pauper is no longer to be less attractive than that of the independent labourer. Public relief is no longer to be confined to the destitute, but is to be extended to everyone who is even likely to become destitute. Upon this basis children are to be maintained, when necessary, as well as educated by the Education Committees; the sick and impotent are to be maintained by the Public Health Committees; the aged by the Pension Committees, and so forth. For the able-bodied a new national authority is to be created under a Minister for Labour, who will organise the labour market in such a way that the "opportunity of employment shall not be lacking to any able-bodied man," and "honourably maintain" those who fail to get employment, in or near "public training" establishments. The Committees will

provide "whatever treatment may seem most appropriate in each case," and the only check upon their action will be the "Registrar," whose duty it will be to register public relief, to sanction grants of home alimint, and recover relief from those able to pay "upon such terms as Parliament may decide."

Its Promises.

The Minority promise great results from their scheme. Overlapping is to be stopped, destitution prevented in its earlier stages and eventually abolished altogether. "We may be unduly hopeful," they say, "but after the most careful consideration and a great deal of consultation with practical administrators on all sides of the question, we make bold to say that it can be done. We can abolish destitution." It would be interesting to learn the names and qualifications of those "practical administrators" who would endorse this statement. The Association of Poor Law Unions, which is the leading body of practical expert opinion upon the subject, has already expressed an opinion adverse to the Report. At the last Central Poor Law Conference, according to the most friendly estimate, only thirty hands were held up in its favour, though some five hundred delegates were present.

This is not the first time in history that we have been promised the abolition of poverty through the Poor Law. Doubtless the authors of the Act of Elizabeth thought that they had solved the problem when they provided for the "relief of the impotent and the setting of the able-bodied on work." Throughout the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries many of the most eminent thinkers, amongst whom John Locke was the most conspicuous, devised scheme after scheme for this very purpose. Sir F. Eden, writing at the close of the eighteenth century,

says, “It may be of some consolation to the many patriotic but unsuccessful philanthropists, who since his time have attempted the arduous work of repairing this portion of the legislative fabric, that even so great a man as Mr Locke attempted it to but little purpose.” Yet once more we have a panacea proposed to us—a short cut out of all our difficulties, and past experience suggests that we should examine it both critically and closely. The manifesto of the crusaders is rather a call to arms than a serious argument, and in order to understand the position clearly we must turn to the Minority Report itself.

Its Claim to “Scientific Precision.”

There is a general impression that it contains a very clearly and fully thought-out scheme of reform. The Commissioners themselves seem to be of that opinion, for they speak of the “detailed and finished scheme which they have presented” (p. 1179).¹ Canon Barnett in a recent number of the “Fortnightly Review” commends the Report for its “scientific precision.” I think that this opinion is erroneous, and in that opinion I am borne out by the able writer of Messrs Knight’s admirable synopsis of the Reports, who says: “An administrator of the present system will naturally desire to understand first, how the new machinery would work in the details of administration. But the Report does not discuss these details except in meagre fashion. It is more concerned with establishing the general principles upon which its scheme of reform depends.” Yet in Poor Law matters details are of the essence of the problem, and even in Part I., where the Commissioners are especially satisfied with the “finish” of their scheme, it will not, I think, be

¹ The references throughout are to the original official volume containing both the Reports of the Commission [CD. 4499].

difficult to show that some of the most important questions are left unanswered. For example, the several Committees to whom the relief of poverty is to be entrusted will "provide, under suitable conditions and safeguards to be embodied in Statutes and regulative Orders, for the several classes of persons committed to their charge, whatever treatment they may deem most appropriate to their condition." But we have in the Report no clear statement of what these conditions and safeguards are to be; all we know is that they are to be laid down at some future period. We know indeed that the Committees are not to be bound by any of the automatic tests of 1834, and we are given to understand that there are still some conditions and safeguards to be "embodied in regulations and statutes." Surely we ought to know what these are to be.

The Registrar.

In the next place the position of the Registrar is far from clear. We naturally ask ourselves whether his control, which is the sole check upon the powers of the Committees, is likely to be an effective substitute for the older automatic checks which are now to be discarded, and we cannot see that this is likely to be the case.

First, it is noticeable that his power in the matter of "home aliment" is only to be a power of revision. The original decision is arrived at by the local executives which the Minority are pleased to call the "many-headed" body. It would appear likely that the original decision will prevail in the vast majority of cases, and that the sanction of the Registrar will, except in extreme cases, be little more than a formality. This view is borne out by the fact that the Registrar will have "nothing to do with the treatment of the case" (p. 1111), but the

most important practical question in the treatment of a case is usually whether indoor or outdoor relief is to be offered. On the other hand, he will plainly have discretion as to the amount of outdoor relief which is to be granted. When two or three of the new authorities have recommended overlapping out-relief for the same family, he will have the power to see that it is "neither too much nor too little." But his general function will apparently be not so much to determine whether out-relief is to be granted, but as to its amount. The practical granting of out-relief will therefore apparently still remain with the "many-headed" body. But even if that is not so, it is evidently the intention of the Minority that out-relief should be granted in all cases where it is reasonably possible, and to many which are now outside the scope of the Poor Law altogether. Those who believe that the Minority wish to restrict out-relief by the intervention of the Registrar, will find themselves disappointed.

The second principal function of the Registrar is to be the recovery of relief from "those able to pay." Here again the ability to pay is to be determined by future legislation, based presumably upon some such consideration as a "poverty line," the course recently roughly adopted by the London County Council with regard to the feeding of school children. It is hardly necessary to point out the extreme practical difficulty of any such enactment. The "poverty line" is an abstraction about which it is next to impossible to generalise. If it is to be based upon earnings, not an agricultural labourer in the country would be assessable by the Registrar. All could claim exemption. We can easily imagine the debates in the House of Commons when such a subject was discussed. The Minority point, apparently in support of their proposals, to the fact that already a certain amount is recovered from

recipients of Poor Law relief. When we examine the figures we find that it amounts to under half a million out of some 15 millions expenditure, or 3 per cent. One-half of this is paid in respect of lunacy cases, when the relations are frequently in good positions, and almost the whole of it is voluntarily offered and paid. The amount is usually roughly assessed between Boards of Guardians and applicants for relief or their relations, and is recovered by moral suasion and appeals to self-respect and personal responsibility. An infinitesimal fraction is recovered by legal process. As a rule, when applicants refuse to repay, the onus of proving means is too hard a task for Guardians, and the matter is allowed to drop. The argument of giving relief on the basis of recovery is a favourite one at the present time, and as it is practically the principal limitation upon the relief proposals of the Minority, it is necessary to examine it narrowly, and to consider whether it is likely to be an effective check upon pauperism. We have had some recent experience in the matter. The argument is most commonly used with regard to the feeding of school children. First feed the child, it is said, and then recover from the parent. Not long ago the Local Government Board issued an Order enabling Guardians to feed school children on that basis. The Order was largely acted upon in Bradford, and of £1300 spent in meals only £3 was recovered. The London County Council are experiencing the same difficulty, and have only recovered £26 out of £34,000. This power of recovery, then, would apparently be of little effect, except in the cases of those who are comparatively affluent. The bulk of the labouring population, whose means are fluctuating and difficult to gauge, but who now contrive to support themselves and their families, and often even to put something by

in a sick club, would be exempt, and it is evidently the intention of the Minority that they should be so. But they are the real difficulty, the real problem. It would perhaps be unfair to say that this aspect of the question of assessment and recovery has not been considered by the Minority. It is evidently part of their deliberate policy that the bulk of the poorer population should be entitled to relief without any question of recovery. In fact, they say in one place, that of course it is impossible to recover from people unless the community places them in the position to pay. Generally speaking, it cannot be said that the Minority scheme is "scientifically precise." It leaves many questions of principle to be settled by future legislation. It discusses details in the most "meagre fashion." It proposes things which have been practically proved to be impossible.

The Abolition of the Poor Law and the Proposal to transfer the Responsibility of giving Relief to various Administrative Departments other than the Poor Law so-called.

The Minority would repeal all Poor Law legislation or Orders subsequent to the Act of Elizabeth, retaining the Act of Elizabeth in order to preserve "the right to relief" (p. 1030). The Act of Elizabeth would then be carried out by the several administrative departments specified: the Poor Law would be "abolished" as a separate branch of administration, but would reappear in education, sanitation, and industry. The Majority criticise this proposal on the ground that it would lead to much overlapping, and that the new authorities being elected for another purpose would consider the question rather from the point of view of their special functions than from a Poor Law point of view. The administration of

public relief is, they consider, a matter of so much complexity, its maladministration in the past has led to such grave evils, that it is necessary that it should be administered by experts specially appointed and qualified for the purpose, otherwise no limits can be set to the spread of pauperism and dependence. The Majority would appear to have some warrant for their criticism in the experience that we have already had of the delegation of relief duties to bodies outside the Poor Law. Since the relief of the able-bodied was handed over by Mr Chamberlain's Circular, and later by the Unemployed Workmen Act, to bodies other than the Guardians, not only has overlapping increased enormously, but the number of the unemployed has also shown a constant tendency to increase. I mean, of course, by the unemployed those who apply as such to public bodies, and not the unemployed percentages of trades unions, for the proportion of trades unionists amongst such applicants is infinitesimal. Similarly with regard to the feeding of necessitous school children. The London County Council have only recently placed it upon the rates, yet within a few months the number of children fed has more than doubled itself and is still increasing. The Minority themselves point out that it has led to a large amount of overlapping, as in many cases the children are fed by the Education Authority whilst their parents receive out-relief from the Guardians. There can be no doubt—indeed the Minority do not attempt to conceal it—that if these various Committees are to administer the Act of Elizabeth upon the lines indicated and with the new duty to “search out destitution,” there will be a vast increase both in expenditure and in pauperism, if, indeed, the word is still to be allowed to have any meaning.

A recapitulation of the duties that will fall upon these Committees if the Minority Report becomes law will serve to show the extent of the responsibilities that will be incurred by the community in regard to the several classes dealt with. In all cases, be it remembered, destitution is to be sought out, and there is to be no waiting for an application for relief, and every case is to receive whatever treatment the Committee dealing with it "may consider most appropriate." The children will be dealt with upon these lines by the Education Committees. Under a special heading, new to the Poor Law, "birth and infancy" will be dealt with by the Public Health Authority, and nursing mothers will receive nourishment both before and after confinement and nourishment for their babies. The sick and impotent will also be maintained by the Public Health Authority, whose duty it will be to search out "incipient" sickness. The feeble-minded will be handed over to a Lunacy Authority, whose business it will be to search out incipient feeble-mindedness—a rather alarming prospect. The aged are to be looked after by the Pension Committee; the age is to be reduced to "sixty-five or even sixty," by which provision the cost will be doubled or even quadrupled at a stroke. For those disabled under the pension age, whatever it may be, "local pensions" will be provided by the Public Health Authority. A network of new institutions, such as public day industrial schools, hospitals, and sanatoria, etc., is also suggested or will be the necessary corollary. The Minority admit the probable increase in expense, but regard it with equanimity. The cost of public assistance, they say, is not keeping pace with the wealth of the country, as if, forsooth! that were a matter for regret; perhaps the future question will be whether the wealth of the country is keeping

pace with the cost of public assistance. But, after all, to many the real question is not the cost but the increase of dependence.

The Able-bodied.

Their proposals in regard to the able-bodied provide for a Minister for Labour, who is to "organise industry" and provide work for as many as possible, and to maintain honourably the remainder. The principal instrument which is to be used in the organisation of industry is the labour exchange, from which all employers of casual labour are to be compelled to hire their labour, though labourers will not be compelled to register unless they become in some way chargeable to the public authority. It will be the duty of the superintendent of the labour exchange to "dovetail" casual work—that is to say, that instead of giving two days' work apiece to A, B, and C, he will give six days' work to one of them at his discretion; at least there is nothing to show how he is to decide between them, and a wide door is opened to favouritism. The other two will be ousted altogether from the labour market, and will have to be maintained. They become "the surplus of labour." "We cannot," say the Minority, "avoid the conclusion that there is this surplus of labour."

Surplus Labour.

This argument of "surplus labour" was used with constant iteration against the reformers of 1834. If we turn to the Majority Report (Part III., sections 442-445) we shall find how it was met by them, and how their arguments were justified by the eventual absorption of this supposed "surplus"

in the labour market. The conditions are very similar at the present moment. Then we had a mass of "unemployed" centring round the parish pay-tables and claiming parish work and parish allowances. Now, we have similar apparently "stagnant pools" of labour besieging the doors of Distress Committees and Borough Council offices. We have in addition huge centralised charities providing relief work and free meals, which make the problem even more acute. Then, as now, we had an alleged surplus of labour which did not disappear till outdoor relief to the able-bodied was cut off and wages were no longer supplemented.

Artificial Exclusion from the Labour Market.

But, assuming for the moment that this surplus of labour is a fact, we have to consider how the Minority propose to deal with it. First, they would endeavour to reduce it by the exclusion of certain classes of labour from the labour market. Women with young children would be provided with adequate outdoor relief on condition that they did no work. The school age would be raised to fifteen, and young people up to eighteen would be only allowed to work thirty hours a week. We can hardly contemplate with equanimity the number of inspectors that would be required to enforce such a policy. We may doubt, judging from the Scottish experiment of giving "adequate relief" to widows in order to keep them out of the labour market,¹ and indeed from much experience in out-relief adminis-

¹ "A considerable number of these widows fell into bad habits, became drunken, and otherwise unsatisfactory, and had to be struck off the roll. . . . So many of the women are devoid of domestic and other interests that work for wages is a positive safeguard. How they are to be taught to care wisely for their homes and their children, and to spend their relief to the best advantage, is a problem which this scheme has not solved."—Majority Report, Part IV., chap. 6, 275.

tration, whether it is desirable to keep women in total idleness. We may doubt whether it would be possible or even desirable, by a cast-iron law, to exclude a young man with ambitions from his workshop, where he may be receiving a much more valuable education than he can get in Polytechnics, and where he is earning something for the support of himself and family, and his work is "sweetened by the prospect of reward." But, supposing that all these proposals¹ were carried out, there would still, say the Minority, be a surplus of labour to be dealt with, and, to use their own expression, "honourably maintained" by the Ministry for Labour. This maintenance would take several forms. The first would be that of adequate "home aliment," on condition of daily attendance at a training establishment. In the second, the head of the family would enter the training establishment and his family would be maintained outside. The third would be the purely residential colony, reserved chiefly for single men. The fourth, the detention colony for the lowest class of labour with "morbid" proclivities. But a large number of men who are now in the labour market, but partially disabled, would be sifted out altogether, and handed over to the Public Health Authority. If unable to do full work, they would not be allowed to do any. We have already seen that by the "dovetailing" process a large number of men would be ousted altogether from the labour market, and it remains to be seen how these are to be dealt with in detail. The Minority tell us (p. 1152) that in Liverpool out of 15,000 men at the docks, 5000 are "surplus labour," and so would have to be excluded from the labour market. If in a single industry in a single town it becomes necessary to maintain 5000 men in training estab-

¹ We may observe that all these proposals are based upon the often exposed "lump of labour" fallacy.

lishments, we can easily see that the problem before us for the whole country is no light one.

The Organisation of the Labour Market.

In their proposals for the "organisation of the labour market," the Minority would, in fact, stretch it, bound hand and foot, upon a bed of Procrustes. The working man would be obliged to accept any job that is offered to him by the labour exchange, regardless of time and place, under the risk, if he refused, of being sent to a penal colony. He might be sent off by administrative order to any part of Great Britain (p. 1208), like the young man in Richter's "Pictures of the Socialistic Future." He would be cut off from all chances of a temporary job, which might be just what he wanted to tide him over a difficulty. If he was a railway, tram, or omnibus employee, his hours of labour would be limited, and he could no longer earn money by working overtime. The employer of labour would be debarred from giving a man a job except through the labour exchange. The whole labour market would be delivered over in fetters to a number of salaried officials.

Training.

We have next to see what is meant by "training." The Minority only tell us that "the technique of this subject is as yet in the making" (p. 1071). They can only offer suggestions, and these suggestions are that mental arithmetic, mechanical drawing, and drawing to scale, gardening, cooking, washing, might be tried. The men are to be medically examined and tested: and there are to be physical exercises and organised recreation (p. 1204). We may pause for the moment to think of the position of Local Authorities such as those in Liverpool, whose business it would be to set 5000 dock

labourers forcibly deprived of all work to mental arithmetic and the rest. But as this theory of "training" is for the moment so generally adopted, and as so much depends upon it, it is necessary that we should examine it very closely. The "technique," say the Minority, is not yet developed. The only experience we have had so far in England has been that of Hollesley Bay, of the results of which the Majority say it is too soon to judge. Many of those who have had experience of Hollesley Bay have grave doubts of the ultimate result of the "training" received there. There were some witnesses before the Commission who feared that the men there were apt to become "institutionalised." Mr Lansbury himself, in a recent article in the "Commonwealth," uses the expressive phrase "wet-nursing" in connection with it, and there is in fact evidence that men there are being "wet-nursed," but not that they are being "wet-nursed" back into the labour market. There is also evidence that the men "do not take the training sufficiently seriously" (p. 1121). The Minority poke fun at the attempt made in certain London Workhouses to supply a "mental instructor" for the able-bodied inmates. The men either "went to sleep or interrupted" (p. 1065). Possibly the trainer of the future may share the same fate as the mental instructor of the past, though he would have the new power of consigning those who showed distaste for mental arithmetic to a "penal colony." Abroad, training colonies have been in existence for many years and the "technique" should have been worked out by this time. But the general consensus of opinion is that their training and reformatory influence has been but slight, and that they have become "colonies of social wreckage rather than colonies of unemployed" (Board of Trade Reports, 1893, 1904).

Hollesley Bay.

As the Report contemplates the establishment of colonies of the Hollesley Bay type "near every large town," it is of some importance to consider what are the results that have been achieved by that colony during the four or five years of its existence. It is necessary first to say that it is managed by a very able staff who are enthusiastically devoted to this work, and that nothing is left undone that appears likely to improve the "technique" of dealing with the unemployed. But so far it has been disappointing in several ways. It is admitted on all sides that it has failed in its original object of "tiding over" periods of unemployment, and it is on its training side that most is now hoped of it. But so far there has not been much to show in this respect. It is claimed for it that it has "trained" a few men for emigration, but there is nothing to show that these men made better emigrants than those who were emigrated direct by the Central Body, the great majority of whom did exceedingly well. A small number of men have been migrated to different parts of the country; some have returned, but some remain. Those who have succeeded may or may not owe their success to the training received there. Altogether the results are at least not very tangible, whilst the expense has been very heavy. There are, however, one or two considerations which have not, I think, received enough attention. The fact is that the atmosphere of a training colony is, in the very nature of things, an extremely artificial one. The men, all of whom are married, are cut off from their wives and families, and have for sixteen weeks no responsibility in regard to them. They work under skilled superintendence by time-table so many hours a week, and receive sixpence a week

pocket-money, which is frequently irregularly supplemented by small sums sent by their wives from the money received for their maintenance. Most of the men live in the main College building, which is a sort of barrack; a small number known as "settlers," who are specially selected for emigration, migration, or life on a small holding, live with their families in cottages on the estate. These cottages are quite unlike ordinary labourers' cottages, and can only be described as of the "garden city" style of architecture. They are picturesque, but the accommodation is not always very suitable. Adjoining them are outhouses which, in order to give the "settlers" a foretaste of life in the backwoods, are of rude "Canadian" construction. There are organised games and recreations, but, as they have not yet been made compulsory, many of the men on the wrong side of forty do not feel moved to take part in them. In the evenings there are lectures, which are compulsory for some of the men, chiefly upon subjects connected with farm or garden, but varied occasionally by matters of general interest. For example, the distinguished authors of the Minority Report gave them, not long ago, a lecture upon the "Problem of the Unemployed," and another upon the "Sweating System." The men are also encouraged to write essays, chiefly upon agricultural subjects, and often write them very well. The Londoner is very quick-witted in such matters. There is no doubt, moreover, that many of the men work well when their task is set them under the supervision of the able farm manager. Their behaviour is usually unexceptionable, and the reports from week to week are that everything is going well. But the question still remains whether this is the sort of training which makes men, or whether the "institutional" atmosphere

of the colony is not inimical to such results. We have little to go upon so far. Only a small percentage of men have been re-established in the labour market. The Minority put it at 10 per cent. (p. 1122). There is nothing to show that even this has been the result of their stay at Hollesley Bay, and we have to set against it the fact that, except for their periodical "outings," they have for sixteen weeks been secluded from opportunities of looking for work. The only other evidence we have as to the results of training colonies comes from abroad, and the only colonies that appear to have met with much success there have been the semi-penal colonies. "Recidivism" is a well-known feature of the foreign colonies, and the "Kolonie bummler" a familiar figure in Germany. It is significant that already there has been a disposition on the part of a good many men who have had their sixteen weeks or more at Hollesley Bay to try to get back there.

Non-Residential Colonies.

Of course the Minority contemplate also another type of colony, the non-residential colony, which is to be a sort of industrial school for the man out of work—but the question of the efficacy of the training is the same everywhere. The theory of this training, which is the keystone of the constructive policy of the Minority in regard to the able-bodied, is that adults can be trained both physically and morally to a new life. But the nature of grown-up men and women is not so easily changed. Those who have experienced the difficulty in a single case, it may be that of a relative or friend, will find it hard to believe that chance comers can be inspired wholesale with morale in public training establishments. Yet otherwise the whole policy falls to the ground.

Errors of Fact.

The Report is strongest on its denunciatory side; yet even here it is by no means infallible. Errors of fact have already been pointed out. For example, it cites the Atcham Union as one in which the children are still educated and maintained in the workhouse (p. 963). At the recent Central Poor Law Conference the Atcham representatives pointed out that they had been sent out to the public elementary schools many years ago. The incident is interesting for a special reason: Atcham is one of the small number of "strictly" administered Unions which are especially obnoxious to the Minority, who never lose a chance of having a "dig" at them when they think that they see the opportunity. In this case, at least, their "dig" has been a failure. So, too, with their assertions as to the excessive infantile mortality in workhouses. The facts are at least disputed. The Minority themselves admit the "shortcomings of the statistical data" (p. 782) upon which they base at least three pages of denunciation in the Report; but of course such loose statements are useful with popular audiences. On the other hand, the Local Government Board has issued a Memorandum upon the subject, which puts a different colour upon the figures, and the Chairman of a large and important London Union has recently shown us that they are quite inapplicable to his Union. Generally speaking, the declamatory statements of the Minority appear likely to defeat themselves by their very extravagance. For example, they are saying publicly that "the whole of the £15,000,000 now spent under the Poor Law is absolutely wasted and thrown away." A perusal of the valuable Blue-book¹ just issued by the Local Government

¹ Public Health and Social Conditions [CD. 4671].

Board is a sufficient answer to this, or a reference to the separate Memorandum of Dr Downes will show what enormous progress has been made.

The Attitude of the Report towards Guardians.

The Report, like that of the Majority, proposes to abolish Boards of Guardians, but not at all because of "any inferiority of calibre" (p. 737) or "any personal shortcomings" (p. 787). On the contrary, "grave injustice has been done to them" by the Majority (p. 1003), although they have given "devoted public service gratuitously rendered" (p. 1007). The Minority wish especially to dissociate themselves from such a statement (by the Majority) as the following:—"The work is tending to fall into the hands of persons who, caring more for their own interests than those of the community, direct their administration more to the attainment of their own popularity than to the solution of the real problem of pauperism" (p. 1003). Such flattering assurances might almost induce Guardians to acquiesce in their own extinction; but, unfortunately, the force of them is considerably modified by other and jarring sentiments in the same Report, which lead us to doubt whether they are altogether sincere. For example, a little earlier they speak of the Guardians as "jealous of the officers and their powers, and keenly alive to the electoral advantages of being able to oblige individuals, and to obtain a reputation for sympathy with the poor in whole neighbourhoods" (p. 760), and a little later of their "short-sighted good-nature, the desire for electoral popularity, the irresistible tendency of a ward representative to be looked on by his supporters as a patron saint" (p. 761), expressions even stronger than those of the Majority at which the

Minority are so shocked. Elsewhere they charge the Guardians with various sins of commission or omission, which are hardly consistent with superior "calibre," intelligence, or even humanity. "They settle down to slipshod inquiry and the soothing dole" (p. 746). "They take no steps to require the most elementary sanitary conditions even, we grieve to say, where children are being reared" (p. 750). They tolerate "mephitic atmospheres" in nurseries. The Local Government Board "despairs" of being able to induce them to remove children from the workhouse (p. 802). "They cannot be got to think of anything but board and lodging" (p. 813). "They have not troubled to look after the children they were maintaining" (p. 831). "The average Guardian is more impressed by these trifles than by solid work" (p. 817). They have been guilty of inhuman or irrational practices (p. 820), and so forth in many other places. Guardians will probably take these buffets and rewards with equal thanks. It is very improbable that they will be cajoled into support of the Minority proposals.

Inconsistencies.

Inconsistency has no terrors for the Minority in speaking to their brief. Inquiry is "slipshod" on p. 746, on p. 833 and elsewhere it is "inquisitorial." In one place Borough Councils are condemned for taking on men "at haphazard" (p. 1162), in another the Unemployed Workmen Act has failed partly owing to the "inquisitorial inquiries" (p. 1129). Coming to their own proposals, the Registrar is to have a staff of officers for "systematic" inquiry. We may ask whether "systematic" inquiry is to be "inquisitorial." They are scornful of the Majority for proposing

such changes in terminology as "continuous treatment" for the "good old-fashioned term 'detention.'" Yet they themselves desire to substitute the word "home aliment" for the "good old-fashioned term" outdoor relief. Similarly, for purposes of declamation, the "cellular" casual wards in Poplar became "solitary pens" (p. 1082), and we can hardly believe it when we read that in the new receiving houses "a certain amount of cellular accommodation will be essential" (p. 1213). When they have to defend their training establishments against the objection that they will be too deterrent, their answer is that "a man has always the alternative of earning his living outside" (p. 1206). But that is precisely the argument that has always been used with regard to the offer of the workhouse of which they will hear nothing. "Solitary pens," "mammoth workhouses," and the like are phrases typical of the wealth of rhetoric in the Report which contribute not a little to its literary effectiveness.

We may notice in passing the naïve surprise of Mr Lansbury (with the others) that "a great number of able-bodied men in health are receiving outdoor relief without any task of work" (p. 1093), although in Mr Lansbury's own Union from 172 to 534 men were so relieved weekly in 1906 (p. 209).

It is interesting to find that the Minority agree that the cause of failure hitherto of labour exchanges has been that they have been associated with Distress Committees and relief works (p. 1124). They quote with approval the words of the late Sir C. Trevelyan as to the evil of "mixing labour with relief" (p. 1097). But this does not prevent them from proposing a scheme by which the labour exchanges and the "maintenance" proposals will be under the same authority working alongside of one another.

Window Dressing.

There is a good deal in the Report which we may look on as a kind of "window dressing" intended to reassure the more timid. The Registrar is to be provided with case-papers "of the most approved pattern." References to "self-respect, personal responsibility, and the integrity of family life," are scattered about as it were with a pepper-pot. For example, the Local Authority is to "stimulate parental responsibility, self-control, and self-help" (pp. 794-5), and how? By the provision of free milk at the municipal depot where the "baby is to be brought to be weighed, the mother's interest not allowed to slacken, praise and approval are to be given when the baby continues well, blame and warning if it sickens." By these means "self-respect, power of will, and personal responsibility," are to be evoked. Similarly in another place the same qualities are to be manufactured by the proposed training establishments. We may differ in our views as to what the result will be in this respect, but we shall all agree that the Socialist writers have in the past given but little prominence to these qualities and conditions. Indeed Socialists of a certain school are altogether inimical at heart to the "integrity of family life." We are entitled, therefore, to look with some suspicion upon this new-born solicitude, especially when it comes from the Fabians, who are generally reputed to be the Jesuits of their creed. The following definition of the "whole duty" of a Fabian is from the pen of a prominent Fabian in the early days of that Society:—"There should be only one absorbing principle in a Fabian's life—the attainment of Social Democracy, and all means and methods to attain that end are laudable. Study to be as morally immoral as possible. To be a

true, earnest, upright Fabian a man should be as free from principle and morality as a parson."—*Workman's Times*, 13th February 1893. *Ridentem dicere verum quid vetat?*

Is it a Socialist Report?

It is curious to observe the anxiety that exists in many unexpected quarters to minimise the Socialist proclivities of the Report. For example, in a little book recently issued and entitled "By What Authority?" a book which is the joint work of three learned professors, we find that "Socialism is not the issue," "there is a marked absence of the formulæ and industrial aspirations of current Socialism" (p. 10). Undoubtedly it has not been the cue of the Minority to put forward the "Socialist aspirations" too baldly, but one would at least have expected that some suspicions might have been aroused in the minds of these ingenuous professors by the general proposals of the Minority, and especially those in regard to the organisation of labour and by the frequent occurrence of well-known Socialist phrases, such as "the way in which we have chosen to organise industry" (pp. 1095, 1131), "an incident of the competitive system" (p. 1132), the "economic circumstances we have chosen to create" (p. 1079). The question, however, has now been set definitely at rest by the enthusiastic reception of the Report by all leading Socialists, and especially by Mr H. G. Wells.

Labour Exchanges as a Test of Unemployment.

The Minority appear to accept the labour exchange as a test of unemployment—that is to say, if there is no job offering to a man at the labour exchange, it is to be assumed that he cannot get

work. This, of course, involves the assumption that all the jobs offering can be registered at the labour exchange, a thing which is inconceivable. Many thousands of labourers now tide over their times of unemployment for themselves by street selling and other quite legitimate ways of earning a living. Thousands of men, who have reached honourable and even distinguished positions, have had in their day to resort to all sorts of shifts and devices to tide themselves over difficulties—shifts and devices which could figure in no labour exchange, however complete. We have heard of writers, who have afterwards become great, who have had to sweep a crossing. We have heard of “captains of industry” who have had similar experience of one kind or another, yet they have “worried through” by grit and self-reliance. Yet these, one and all, could under the Minority proposals claim at the first check in their career to be maintained in a training establishment, because there might be nothing offering for them at the labour exchange. The Minority point out to us with regard to insurance against unemployment that “the power to draw out-of-work pay may, by its subtle play upon motive, tend insidiously to slacken the effort to obtain another job” (p. 1143); and, again, that the labourers before 1834, “secure of subsistence, lowered the quality and quantity of their effort” (p. 1038). What, then, would be the result of “honourable” maintenance and “secure subsistence” in a training establishment with mental arithmetic, organised recreation, physical drill, and the rest? What would have been the fate of many men who have succeeded after a life of struggle, if at some critical moment in their lives they had been relegated to a training establishment, whilst their wives and families received “adequate home aliment”?

Regularisation.

Towards the end of the Report we find an elaborate scheme for the "regularisation" of labour. Under this the Government is to "ear-mark" at least four millions a year of expenditure upon the public service, for work which is to be undertaken out of loan on a ten years' programme at unequal annual rates to the extent of ten or even fifteen millions in a single year whenever the "Index Number" of unemployment has reached "Warning Point" (p. 1196). The money is then to be spent in guns, battleships, barracks, post offices, schools, printing historical manuscripts, and renewing worn-out furniture. Simultaneously public bodies are to be urged to undertake their ordinary municipal work. It may be feared that the "Index Number," which will be determined by the number of applications for work to the labour exchange of the future, will tend under these conditions to remain permanently at "Warning Point," and there is after all some limit to the number of guns, battleships, etc., which are required, and some limit to the ordinary municipal undertakings of Borough Councils. Many will be of opinion that already there has been far too much pressure put upon them to manufacture work. There are those who will enter a protest against these further proposals for the manipulation of the labour market. Sir George Nicholls said many years ago, "No one now doubts the pernicious effect of artificial employment, or is blind to the consequences of tampering with the labour market, whether by the parish or in any other way," and that until lately has been the view of most responsible statesmen. We first turned our back upon that policy in 1886 when Mr Chamberlain issued his "momentous" Circular, and we have since embodied the principle of that

Circular in the Unemployed Workmen Act. Like all previous attempts at manipulation, both the Circular and the Act have been shown to be failures, yet their failure is now made a reason for further efforts in the same direction.

The Minority and the Moral Factor.

The attitude of the Minority in regard to the question of character is a difficult one to understand. They complain in their manifesto of critics who say that they ignore the "moral factor" of the problem of pauperism. The moral factor, they say, is to them "the whole of the problem." But this is difficult to reconcile with their views in several parts of the Report. For example, in speaking of unemployment they say, "We have deliberately subordinated the question of character because it does not seem to us to be of significance with regard to the existence or amount of unemployment" (p. 1172). But they contradict themselves almost in the next sentence, because they admit that efficiency of labour, which is another word for character, "is one of the factors of productivity, and the greater the national product the larger the number of persons it will maintain." The amount of unemployment, they say, depends upon "briskness of trade," but it is impossible to conceive of trade being brisk in any country where the workers are inefficient or wanting in morale. Every efficient worker becomes a consumer as well as a producer, and swells the demand for commodities upon which briskness of trade depends. But further, the efficient and thrifty man has as often as not invested his money, not in beer and tobacco, but in the numerous investments available for working men, all of which are employed in reproductive enterprise and give employment to

labour. The savings of the working classes under this head are at the present moment about 400 millions. On the other hand, the consuming power of the less efficient worker is reduced to a minimum, or he becomes an actual burden upon industry, like the "parasitic" labourer before 1834 (p. 1037). The Minority admit, indeed, that distress from unemployment is greatly aggravated by faults of character. This we believe to be true both because the inefficient, undisciplined man is not readily employed, and also because his unwise methods of expenditure do not contribute to the conditions which cause "briskness of trade." We should have expected, if for these reasons only, that they would have been anxious to maintain a high standard of character. But what is their conclusion? After a sneer at the ideal of the "capable and perfectly virtuous man who may possibly be able to go through a period of prolonged unemployment without physical or mental deterioration," they decide that the question of character is totally irrelevant, and because "the unemployed are like other men, full of faults" (p. 1175), they determine to ignore it altogether.

But that, of course, is only the question of character in regard to the particular issue of unemployment; there is the wider question of its relation to the whole problem of poverty. In regard to this everything depends upon what we mean by "character," what this "moral factor" really is, and what are the conditions essential to its existence. The Minority tell us in their manifesto that it is something which can only be enforced by the methods they propose; and, though they are not very explicit, they give us to understand that this is to be done by administrative action in individual cases when certain rules of conduct have been definitely violated. If a man is

a drunkard, or if he is actively cruel to his wife and children, he will be discovered and "got at" through the various Committees, and will be "trained" or punished; and so, presumably, when many have been trained or punished the "moral factor" will once more assert itself. But until there has been some actual transgression of the moral law, some actual dereliction of duty, no action can be taken, and action can only be taken in individual cases. The "moral factor," as some of us conceive it, is of quite a different nature. It turns upon the effect that the expectation of public maintenance has, or is likely to have, upon whole sections of the poorer population in relation to pauperism and dependence. This is no question of active immorality. Pauperism is a negation—the loss of something, rather than a definite violation of any law. It is rather an economic phenomenon, the expression of the rule that human nature follows the line of least resistance, and, if encouraged to do so, becomes atrophied in body and soul. It is a question of morale rather than of morals. We have had and still have plenty of experience of it in this country. The Minority are quite aware of its existence. They speak in one place of the "demoralisation of the rural population by a hypertrophied Poor Law" before 1834. What they have now to prove, therefore, is that their present proposals—which are surely for a "hypertrophied" Poor Law, if ever there was one—will not have similar results.

Attitude of the Minority towards Charity.

Curiously enough, the Minority admit the demoralising effect of charity. In fact they view it with so much apprehension that they would abolish it altogether, except so far as institutional

relief is concerned. "No encouragement whatever," they say, "should be given to any distribution of food, clothes, or money in the homes of the poor by voluntary charity" (p. 1022). They would thus throw everything that is now done by voluntary charity at the home upon the rates. It is strange that, after all the evidence that they have received as to the evils of outdoor relief, both now and in the past, that they should give it this preference over charity. The truth may be that voluntary charity is incompatible with the Socialist ideals.

Conclusion.

The Minority then invite us to pass a sponge over the slate of Poor Law history from 1601 onwards; to discard all experience; to set at nought the teaching and conclusions of all responsible writers upon the Poor Law; and, more particularly, to reverse the "principles of 1834." And yet many eminent thinkers of wide experience have endorsed those principles. Mr Gladstone, shortly before his death, told us that the Poor Law of 1834 "rescued the English peasantry from the total loss of its independence" (Life, vol. i., p. 115), and Mr Gladstone had lived under both the old Poor Law and the new. The evidence before the present Commissioners shows that since the reform of 1834 rural able-bodied pauperism has almost disappeared, which is no small testimony in their favour. Dr Munsterberg, the eminent director of poor relief in Berlin, has told us in his evidence that in Germany they have adopted the principle of "less eligibility," which is at the root of the principles of 1834. Yet, in spite of all this, we are asked to embark upon a revolutionary scheme of "constructive Socialism," which is contrary to all experience,

and, we might almost say, to all common-sense. Its authors have had no experience of Poor Law administration, but are the leaders of the most powerful Socialist movement in the country. Their arguments are so inconclusive, so irrelevant to a solution of the problem and to difficulties which are common to all countries in which poor laws exist, that we cannot believe that they are intended as a serious contribution to the literature of the question. The Report, indeed, appears to be rather an attempt to trouble the waters for the coming Socialist fishing-party. Its authors are indeed perfectly frank in some respects. The scheme is admittedly a *ballon d'essai*. To those who criticise their proposals in regard to unemployment as visionary, their reply is: "It is not a valid objection that a demonstrably perfect technique, either with regard to the prevalence of unemployment or the treatment of the unemployed, has never yet been worked out. No such technique can ever be more than foreshadowed until it is put into operation." Utopian? they say; well, we have only to put it in operation and see. "Could there have been anything more Utopian in 1860 than a picture of what to-day we take as a matter of course, the seven million children emerging every morning washed and brushed from five or six million homes in every part of the kingdom, traversing street and road and lonely woodland, going o'er moor and fell, to present themselves at a given hour at their 30,000 schools, where each of the seven million finds his or her own individual place, with books and blackboard and teacher provided?" (p. 1215). The analogy, despite its poetic force, is a misleading one. The problem of organising public education and of providing "books, blackboard, and teachers" is a very different one from that of "abolishing

destitution," and recalling the Golden Age. Their proposals are for the control by a bureaucracy of those moral and economic forces which move the whole of human society, and nothing similar to them has ever been proposed or even dreamed of either in this or in any other country.

“THE SLIPPERY SLOPE”

THE principle of “acceleration” has been referred to in a former chapter. The expression used by Dr Chalmers hardly requires explanation, but it may be well to cite his own words: “Every known charity for the relief of indigence,” he says, “multiplies its objects . . . it tells, and with great practical certainty, upon all their habits of indulgence and expense . . . and hence it is that a public charity necessarily creates more poverty than it provides for; that a feeling of pressure or deficiency haunts every footstep of its operations; and that the evil which it tries to overtake swells and magnifies upon all its advances.” This is only to say that the forces that make for public relief acquire additional momentum as they travel. The principle has been illustrated historically: it may be well to trace its effects in our present social economy.

And first with regard to expenditure, though this is by no means the most important aspect of the question. If the social question could be solved by public expenditure no one would ever wish to economise, but otherwise we can only view with great alarm the enormous increase in recent years. A quarter of a century ago the total public expenditure for relief of all kinds was about eight millions; it is now approximately thirty millions. Relief under the Poor Law has nearly

doubled itself. The last Annual Report of the Local Government Board was over £15,000,000, and since 1908 another £13,000,000 has been added for old age pensions, with the certainty of a considerable increase in the near future. In 1910, £183,000 were spent for the relief of the able-bodied under the Unemployed Workmen Act. To this must be added an unascertained sum for the relief of school children by the Education Authorities, whilst the Insurance Act is eleemosynary to the extent of "ninepence for fourpence." Yet, a feeling of pressure haunts every footstep of our eleemosynary legislation, and the supply creates a demand of ever increasing insistence. The Majority Report of the Royal Commission on the Poor Law points out that notwithstanding our enormous expenditure, amounting to nearly sixty millions a year upon poor relief, education, and public health, we have now an enormous army of paupers quartered upon us unable to support themselves, an army which has recently shown signs of increase rather than of decrease: to what, it says, is this retrogression due? It cannot be attributed to lack of experience (Part II., p. 152). No indeed; the reply to this ingenious question may be that the contrary is the case. We all know the well-worn sayings that "you may have as many paupers as you choose to pay for," "the plaister is never as large as the sore."

The increase in expenditure is serious, but the increase in the dependence of the people is far more alarming, and this applies to all departments of public relief. Up to 1886 there was no public relief outside the Poor Law, but in 1886 Mr Chamberlain's Circular gave the first impulse to the "break-up" of the Poor Law. That Circular made provision for the relief of certain classes of workmen "ordinarily in employment but temporarily un-

employed" by public bodies other than Boards of Guardians, and gave the first official sanction to the relief of any class of the poor outside the Poor Law. The Circular was specifically stated to be only intended for times of exceptional distress, but "exceptional distress" was not defined, and the Circular was issued again and again by successive Presidents and its operation became continuous. This was followed in 1905 by the Unemployed Workmen Act, which like the Circular was intended for times of exceptional distress, but the provision of State relief work became thenceforward a normal feature of the winter months. We see, therefore, the accelerative forces in regard to the relief of the able-bodied which began by taking them outside the limitations of the Poor Law, and which have since carried us on from a Local Government Circular issued for a special occasion to a permanent system of public relief embodied in an Act of Parliament. But the process of acceleration has continued since the Act itself came into force. For it was originally intended that public money should be used for machinery only and that the actual work should be provided by voluntary subscription, a "safeguard" which disarmed much opposition. Mr Long indeed, when he promulgated his scheme upon which the Act was based, assured us that under no conditions could a Treasury grant be made. But voluntary funds disappeared after the first year; Mr Burns was compelled to promise a Treasury grant within a few months of his accession to office, and since then all work has been provided by public money. The checks and safeguards originally inserted in the Act have been abandoned one by one. So far from being reserved for an exceptional class of workmen, it has been almost monopolised by the casual labourer. It has done much to aggravate the evils of casual labour

by creating nurseries of casual labour throughout the country. It has been unanimously condemned by the Royal Commission on the Poor Law. Yet no one has had the courage to put an end to it because a large section of the political world believe that they see in it the germ of further extension. Both Mr Ramsay Macdonald and Mr Crooks have hailed it as a recognition of the "right to work," and the Fabian Society welcome it as a recognition of the principle of the break-up of the Poor Law. And so we see acceleration at work with the prospects of further acceleration.

In 1895 another step was taken towards the break-up of the Poor Law when Mr Chamberlain propounded his scheme of deferred annuities in order to make provision for the aged poor outside the Poor Law, and Old Age Pensions were then for the first time brought within the range of practical politics. His scheme was contributory and strictly limited, but the limitations were pronounced to be impracticable. It paved the way, however, to a host of similar contributory schemes, and over a hundred of them were considered and reported upon by Lord Rothschild's Committee in 1898. None were recommended, but by this time "the principle had been accepted," and Mr Charles Booth published his universal non-contributory scheme which ultimately became the basis of the present Act. But the Act itself had hardly been passed before the process of acceleration again set in. It was at first intended that Poor Law relief should disqualify, and there were many prophecies that this would stimulate to self-support until the pension age was reached. But this provision led to such obvious injustice that the idea was soon abandoned, and in 1911 the Poor Law disqualification was swept away altogether.

In 1906 the first step towards removing children

from the province of the Poor Law was taken by the Provision of Meals Act, and the accelerative process in regard to them has been even more remarkable. It is interesting, indeed, to go back as far as the Education Act of 1870 and to trace the course of events since that time. First of all a cheap and efficient elementary education was provided for all poor children; their education was made compulsory, and then it was made free, and it was argued that the remission of fees by which some two or three millions was returned to the pockets of the labouring classes would enable them to feed and clothe their children. But this argument was soon forgotten, and within a few years the question of the feeding of school children became acute. For some time the need was met by voluntary action through the London School Dinners Association and other similar bodies, but the Socialist pressure for State action became stronger and stronger. That pressure culminated on the Provision of Meals Act of 1906, which gave power to Education Authorities to charge school meals upon the rates. For a time an attempt was made to maintain the voluntary system, but in 1908 the London County Council yielded to irresistible pressure and threw the charge upon the rates, and other education authorities followed their example. Since then acceleration has set in fast and furious. The average weekly number of children fed in London has gone up from 29,000 to 42,000, and the number of meals provided from 74,000 to 203,000 (Ann. Report L. C. C. 1910, Vol. IV., p. 38). At first the hope was held out that a large part of the cost would be recovered from neglectful parents, but last year only £510 was recovered out of £88,000 spent. There is now a strong agitation to continue the meals during the school holidays. But lately a further

movement has set in : it is argued, quite irresistibly, that the ailing school child is often suffering from causes other than that of lack of food, and in 1907 the (Education) Administrative Provisions Act was passed which provides for the medical inspection of all school children, and where necessary for their medical treatment. Following the precedents of the Unemployed Workmen Act and the Provision of Meals Act, the London County Council are at present trying to provide this treatment through the voluntary hospitals and dispensaries, but there is already strong pressure for the establishment of rate supported clinics, and there can be little doubt that this will be the ultimate result. The Act provides for the recovery of part of the cost from the parents, but last year only £329 was so recovered, and it is clear that this provision cannot operate as an effective check. Meanwhile the London County Council, who "have found considerable difficulties in this part of the work" (*ibid.*, p. 44), have adopted a maximum charge of 1s. and a minimum of 1d., but "arrangements are being made for remitting the charge in necessitous cases." If we ask what are "necessitous cases," the answer is "No hard-and-fast rule for determining necessity has been adopted by the Council" (*ibid.*, p. 35). If we ask what is the test of the need of the child, the answer is, "There is no absolute standard of what or what is not healthy nutrition . . . *necessitous children are not necessarily ill-nourished at the time of application, though they would become so were relief withheld*" (*ibid.*, p. 35). It is clear, therefore, that the Council are not disposed to be at all exacting either as to the means of the parent or the needs of the child. If the following sentence from the report of the Education Officer is to be taken as an indication of the opinion of the Council, it is clear that they

consider that education is synonymous with the entire State maintenance of children. "Formerly education," he says, "was in the main confined (1) to the growth of character, (2) to the growth of the mind. Now it looks increasingly at the social problems that present themselves for solution in the case of the individual child, the problem of physical deterioration, of under-feeding, of impoverished homes, and unsuitable employment. The State has come to see that it is not sufficient to impart knowledge, but that it must also see that the child is capable of assimilating that knowledge." It is noticeable that not a word is said as to the duties of the parent. The process of acceleration has, in a word, brought us in forty years from State education to State maintenance.

It has always been argued that the various measures of "social reform" which have been referred to would reduce the pressure upon the Poor Law and perhaps altogether do away with the necessity for a Poor Law. They have shown no signs of doing this up to the present. The Unemployed Workmen Act was intended to prevent able-bodied workmen from coming upon the Poor Law, yet the statistics of able-bodied pauperism show no reduction.

The figures for quinquennial periods are as follows :—

1892	.	.	9,245	1907	.	.	111,503
1897	.	.	101,829	1912	.	.	120,217
1902	.	.	94,681				

Annual Report L. G. B., 1911, ii., p. 153.

There are many who urge that the Old Age Pensions Act would do away with the necessity for workhouses, yet the figures of indoor pauperism continue to rise.

The figures are :—

Jan. 1, 1892 . . .	175,341	Jan. 1, 1907 . . .	245,945
„ 1897 . . .	198,750	„ 1912 . . .	260,206
„ 1902 . . .	209,280		

Ibid., p. 151.

In spite of the feeding and medical treatment of children by the Education Authority, as large a number of children as before continue to receive relief of all kinds from the Poor Law.

The figures are :—

Year.	Children returned under the Poor Law.	
	Indoor.	Outdoor.
1892	50,282	177,245
1897	52,270	178,186
1902	52,864	159,143
1907	60,421	171,497*
1912	70,698	181,139

* Annual Report L. G. B., 1911, ii, p. 151.

There is good reason indeed to believe that some at least of these measures tend to feed the Poor Law rather than to atrophy it; any measure which creates pauperism outside the Poor Law must ultimately tend to create pauperism within the Poor Law, which has to deal with the wreckage. A very large proportion of those who have been inadequately dealt with by the Unemployed Workmen Act undoubtedly come back ultimately upon the Poor Law. A return presented to the Royal Commission from a single district showed that of 437 cases assisted by the Distress Committee, 234 were previously known to the Guardians, whilst 81 of them had already reverted to the Poor Law, and these figures may probably be taken as fairly typical of the conditions elsewhere. The Act had at that time only been in operation for about three years, and the number of similar cases must now

be very considerable. So, too, with the Old Age Pensions Act. Not only do a large number of old age pensioners continue to receive poor relief, but the Act is actually bringing upon the Poor Law a number of people who would otherwise have been maintained either by themselves or by their relations. When the pauper disqualification was removed there was, of course, a large transfer of outdoor paupers from the out-relief lists to the pension authority, but this led at once to a marked increase in out-relief to those under seventy. The Local Government Board call attention to this in their half-yearly return for 1st January 1911, and it is strongly corroborated by a recent return from the Lambeth Union, showing that there were 200 more outdoor poor under seventy than at the corresponding period of the previous year. It may be added that almost all recent returns show a marked increase in outdoor relief to those under seventy. In other words, the places of those who have been transferred to the pension authority are being gradually filled by younger people. This is not at all to be wondered at. Formerly, the older people were given preference in out-relief, which is a charge upon the rates, and the Guardians had the fear of the ratepayers before their eyes, so far as younger people were concerned. Now the older people have been transferred to the imperial taxation, and they can safely put the younger ones on the list without serious increase of local charges. But, in addition to this, the fact that an old age pension is due in a year or two is now used as an irresistible argument for giving outdoor relief in the interim. It will be remembered that the argument used when the Old Age Pensions Act was passed, was that the prospect of a pension at a certain age would be a strong inducement to people to keep off the rates up to that time; but,

instead of this, we see that relief is made a reason for more relief.

Formerly, the greatest stress was laid upon the condition that the old age pensioner should be dissociated altogether from the Poor Law, and for that reason the administration of the Act was assigned to the officers of excise, who, of course, are entirely unversed in such administration, whilst the very name of the relieving officer was anathema. For the same reason, strict rules were laid down that all the information obtained by the excise officers regarding old age pensioners should be treated as confidential, and there was to be no touch between old age pensioners and the Guardians. But, in fact, a very large number of old age pensioners continued to receive Poor Law relief, often simultaneously with their pension, whilst the Guardians are unable to recover any appreciable part of the cost. The Committee of the Central Poor Law Conference have recently made some inquiries into the matter, and have received definite answers from about 134 Boards of Guardians. The result is very striking. At least 100 of these Boards report duplicated relief, which usually takes the form of infirmary treatment plus the old age pension, whilst they are in most cases entirely unable to recover anything from the pensioner. In West Derby, for example, in a single year 301 pensioners received duplicated relief of this kind, and only £10 was recovered. In Bethnal Green the number was 240, and all but six of these continued to receive their pensions; practically nothing was recovered.

There is similar evidence from a number of other Unions. The pension authority, in most cases following instructions from headquarters, refused to give any information to, or to co-operate with, the Guardians. We have thus the singular

spectacle of a public body administering relief from the rates and taxes adopting a semi-hostile attitude towards another body also administering relief from public money. The Local Government Board, when appealed to by the Sudbury Guardians for an opinion as to the power of recovery, give a guarded but extremely discouraging answer. It is not surprising that Poor Law relief, under these circumstances, shows no tendency to decrease. It was reported to the writer that, in another Union, old age pensioners have discovered that they can supplement their pensions by obtaining continuous outdoor medical relief in kind, and that, in fact, they frequently do so. And so the snowball of pauperism continues to roll onwards, acquiring additional momentum as it travels, and picking up all those who come in its way.

Finally, by the break up of the Poor Law, we are fast losing the power of gauging our economic position by facts and statistics. So long as the Poor Law was the sole relief authority we could ascertain, by a glance at its statistics, the exact position of the country in regard to the public relief of the poor, and could answer, with some approach to certainty, the vital question as to what proportion of the population lives by its labour, and what proportion by some form of public subsidy. But this is no longer possible. The official statistics now cover only a portion of the ground, because some four or five other bodies, whose finance and accounts are quite separate, now administer relief, whilst there is no attempt to bring either the relief that they administer or the number of people that they relieve into a common account. In former times, the greatest importance was attached to the keeping of accurate statistics under both heads, in order that the nation might at any time take stock of its economic position.

But this is no longer possible. Everything is becoming confused and chaotic, and we are throwing away our last check upon the onrush of pauperism by burying public relief in the statistics of other branches of public administration, and disguising it as education, public health, or the reward of industry.

THE PSYCHOLOGY OF PAUPERISM

"Mankind have nothing to stir them to action but their needs, which it is wisdom to relieve but folly to remove."—MANDEVILLE, "Fable of the Bees."

PAUPERISM is a dismal subject, and many people nowadays are apt to be impatient at the very mention of it: they regard it as an abstraction, a bogey to frighten the timid away from the paths of what is known to politicians under the name of "social reform." Those who have read its past history, and still more those who have seen it in the concrete, and have, over a long series of years, watched its devastating influence upon human character, know that it is the chief reason why many schemes which have been suggested and put in practice for the improvement of the condition of the poor have hitherto met with so small a measure of success, or failed altogether. It is for this reason that we must, if we are to make any real progress, face this difficulty from the outset. If we do not face it we must be content to be for ever rolling a stone uphill, as many generations of philanthropists have done in the past, as many philanthropists are doing even now. There is perhaps no question in which natural impulses are so much at variance with the teaching of experience and in which there are so many apparent paradoxes. There is certainly no question in which so much initial patience and humility is required from those who wish to find

the right way, and patience and humility are by no means so common amongst philanthropists as we should expect them to be. At the same time there is no reason to despair. Social questions have been studied more closely in the last thirty years than they have ever been before, and already there are many signs that people in general are becoming much more conscious of their difficulties, and much more ready to recognise that the study of the problem of poverty is a science in itself. It is true that, for the moment, there are many forces, sentimental and political, which are adverse to its full application, but one can but believe that these will gradually disappear as the enlightenment of the community upon the subject becomes more complete.

We have, then, first of all to be clear in our minds as to what we mean by the word "pauperism." Though the Latin word *pauper* only means a poor person, "pauperism" has acquired by use a quite different signification from poverty. In a healthy community there may be many poor; there cannot be many paupers. In this country most of the people are poor in that they live upon a wage, weekly or otherwise, and have no accumulated wealth. Yet to-day the great majority of the people are self-supporting. So, too, with other countries. In Norway, nearly all are poor, yet, probably for that very reason, there are few paupers. Pauperism presupposes the means of pauperisation, which can hardly be said to exist in that country, and we find there one of the finest peasant populations in the world, both physically and morally.

What, then, is pauperism? The answer is, that it is in its essence a question of character rather than of externals. It is, so to speak, a negation, a loss of something, rather than a positive

quality. Pauperism is associated in the minds of many with vice and crime, and it is true that these are often its ultimate development. But for all that they are not of its essence. Many a pauper is at first neither vicious nor criminal. Many people who are both vicious and criminal are not paupers. The first step in pauperism is to the average man analogous to the loss of virtue in a woman. He is never quite the same again. Though there are some who have the strength of will to resist its further stages, yet to the many it means the gradual mildew of the spirit, the blunting of energy both physical and moral, and the loss of responsibility and self-control. It is an insidious thing, and attacks human nature on its weakest side, the side of its indolence, and the danger is common to rich and poor. It is the outward expression of the economic law, which is as inexorable as the law of gravitation, that average human nature, like everything in the physical world, follows the line of least resistance, or, in other words, takes life in the easiest way. The pauper is not so much a poor person as a poor creature. There are paupers among the rich as well as among the poor, but they have had at least the opportunities of higher education and different environment. The poor have no such safeguard. The first step downwards, once taken, leads to an abyss which has no bottom. Many of us will remember one of George Eliot's best known characters who "at first had no thoughts that were base, but because he tried to slip away from everything that was unpleasant . . . he came at last to commit some of the basest deeds that make men infamous. . . . He betrayed every trust that he might keep himself safe—yet calamity overtook him." Pauperism is the loss of grit, initiative, gumption, self-respect—what you

will. Its insidiousness lies in the fact that it appeals to the weakest side of human nature.

What, then, is the most potent antidote to this tendency which is common to all? It is to be found in one thing and one thing only, namely, in the discipline of life which has been imposed upon all as a corrective of natural indolence. The discipline of life is a subtle force which presents itself to different people in different ways, but which is always a spur to activity either of hand or brain, the alternative to which is stagnation and decay. "Life anywhere will swallow a man unless he rise vigorously and try to swallow it." We often hear of the "idle rich." Why is it that many of them are so? It is because the stimulus of the discipline of life has been removed from them by their riches and they have found no discipline of the will to take its place. As their numbers are comparatively small, they are not, except for the example they set, a national danger. With the poor it is otherwise. They constitute the nation, and the destiny of the nation is bound up with theirs. If we remove from large sections of the population this driving force we remove the mainspring of their activity, and withdraw from under them the prop and stay that prevents them from sinking into the slough of pauperism. For them that discipline consists in the forces of self-preservation, in the maintenance of themselves and those who depend upon them, and in the love of family and home life which is the root and anchor of self-control and self-sacrifice. For them, above all, these virtues, which it is the fashion nowadays to ignore or to deride as impossible, are essential, because when they are lost "calamity overtakes them" and "life swallows them up." We know that such virtues are not impossible, because amongst the non-pauperised population we find them existing as strongly as

ever. The struggle is a hard one, especially to those who are on the borderland, but it is by it that character is made. The temptation to take what seems the easier way is ever present. Every unhappy tramp or mendicant has learnt his first lesson in dependence from some dole of charity or of the Poor Law, and "calamity has overtaken him."

"It is reluctance on the part of the poor man to become a pauper which forms the mighty barrier against the extension of pauperism. . . . There is not a labourer in the country, however well paid he might be, who might not become a pauper at the first moment of his decaying strength or declining wages. . . . To relax the industry by a very little, or to let down to a small and imperceptible extent the economical habits, . . . these are the simple expedients by which, when once the mighty hold of self-dependence is loosened, the daily increasing thousands of a city population may in the shape of famished wives, ragged children, or destitute old men inundate the amplest charity." These words were written by Dr Chalmers more than half a century ago. They are as true now as ever they were. The first step towards pauperism is the crucial one. The virtue has gone out of a man and the inward decay has begun.

Pauperism, therefore, is a question of character affecting large masses of the people. Till within the last few years it had been a gradually disappearing factor in this country. But since, roughly speaking, the beginning of the nineties there has been a reaction. Our great object-lesson in pauperism in England is the old Poor Law, and we may take it for granted that every one has some knowledge of the conditions of those times. It is only necessary to say that it brought this country nearer to ruin than anything before or since, and that before 1834 pauperism was a canker

which, as was said at the time, was fast consuming the vitals of the nation.

But we have no need to go back so far for illustrations of the intimate connection between Poor Law administration and pauperism. At the present time, wherever administration is free and easy—or, as some would call it, humane—there we find a high rate of pauperism; wherever it is careful and strict, we find a low one. Professor Fawcett's dictum that "you may have as many paupers as you choose to pay for" is no less true to-day than it was seventy years ago. The rise and fall of pauperism over the last century coincides almost exactly with the ebb and flow of administration. Of course there have been crises like the Manchester and Irish famines which have created extraordinary conditions, but in normal times every year's experience has added additional testimony to its truth. The remarkable variations in the pauperism of different Unions at the present time tell the same tale. Why is it, for example, to take the West End of London, that the pauperism of St George's, Hanover Square, is 31.3 per 1000 whilst that of Fulham, a much poorer district, is only 17.7 per 1000? Why is it, if we take the Northern district, that pauperism in Islington is 34.7 per 1000, whilst in Hackney it is only 27.9? Why is it that in the Eastern district, where there is uniformity of poverty, the pauperism of Poplar is 57.6, whilst that of Bethnal Green is only 27.4 and that of Whitechapel and St George's only 33? Or, if we compare East with West, why is it that St George's, Hanover Square, though its population is smaller, has more than 300 more paupers than Bethnal Green? There can, of course, be only one answer, namely, that these Unions have adopted different methods of administration.

The principle applies to the country as well as

to the towns. In such places as Bradfield, Brixworth, and Atcham, where a strict system at one time prevailed, though they have most of them reverted to less stringent methods, the rate of pauperism is still much lower than in surrounding Unions. Perhaps enough has been said by figures and illustration to show the closeness of the connection between methods of administration and pauperism; but as many people have a rooted distrust of statistics, which they say "may be made to prove anything," it may be well to submit the question to some further analysis, and to look at it, so to speak, from behind the scenes. Some years ago the Bethnal Green Board appointed a special Committee to consider their own system of out-relief, which was then what is known as a "lax" one, almost anyone who applied being able to get it, though in very small doses. This Committee took the evidence of their relieving officers and examined their books and records. The conclusions that they came to are of some general interest. In the first place, it was clear that the great majority of the cases were chronic: one relieving officer had had the same cases in his books on and off for over twenty years. Another said that 70 to 80 per cent. of his cases were chronic. Then, again, the habit of applying for relief ran in certain families and in certain streets and localities. In some cases three generations of the same family were upon the books, and there was abundant evidence of hereditary pauperism. It was contagious. "The people on the ground floor apply because the people on the upper floor are having it." In some streets the mere sight of the relieving officer brought in a crop of applications the next day. "Our visits," they said, "manufacture applications." But perhaps this is to elaborate too much what is an obvious proposi-

tion. Of course poor people will apply for what they believe to be their share of a fund which is in their eyes inexhaustible and specially intended for them; would anyone refrain from increasing his income if he could do so simply by the asking? But soon the "amplest charity," the most "free and easy" poor law, is inundated and overwhelmed. It has been so in Poplar, West Ham, and other Unions in and about London. It was so again and again in France in Revolutionary and post-Revolutionary periods, when they tried to put into practice the teaching of Rousseau. Sooner or later the reaction comes, the public purse is exhausted, and poor people are left to face the world robbed of their only real resources, namely, those that lie in themselves. Seventy years ago practically the whole population was in the clutches of the Poor Law. Then came the great struggle of 1834, and practical emancipation. Now we are again upon the top of a reaction. Since 1900 the official figures of pauperism have been steadily on the upgrade, and we have now a huge volume of State relief which is outside the Poor Law altogether. Of course the official figures do not measure exactly the number of those who have acquired the pauper spirit. Exceptional crises may from time to time swell the figures with those who are far from being paupers. At all times there are included in them some who cannot rightly be regarded as such. But political economy deals with tendencies, and from that point of view the official figures may fairly be taken as a test. When we find two Unions externally identical, of which the one has double the pauperism of the other, we know that the process of pauperisation has set in, and that large numbers of the poor have been tempted to give up the struggle for life and to surrender their independence. We know also that calamity over-

takes them, and that of all policies this is the most inhuman.

Such appear, then, to be the main features of the problem of pauperism. Its main antidote heretofore has been the discipline of life which has enforced prudence, self-restraint, and self-sacrifice for the sake of others. If this is to be removed something will have to take its place, for pauperism, which is the negative of these virtues, will not suffer itself to be ignored or treated by methods of obscurantism. The alteration now proposed is the discipline of the law with inspector and policeman in the background. We may be permitted to doubt whether it will prove less irksome or equally effective.

APPENDIX I

THE RELATION OF LEGAL RELIEF TO PRIVATE CHARITY

THE controversy as to the respective functions and merits of public and private relief is no new one; in order to understand it rightly it is necessary to know something of the history of the question, both past and present, and this it will be my endeavour to sketch briefly to-day. The subject has been discussed more than once before at these Conferences. It was my privilege to be present upon one such occasion six years ago, and I was then impressed on the one hand by the enlightened views of many of the speakers, on the other by the fact that there were still a considerable number of Poor Law administrators who failed to recognise the underlying distinction between public and private relief, and were content to deal with the question by rule of thumb. Since then much water has flowed under the bridges. There has been a considerable swing in the pendulum of public opinion, and several important changes in legislation affecting the poor. Many new Guardians have been elected who desire to get at the truth in these matters, and it is for every reason very desirable that the subject should be again discussed from every aspect.

Though there is at present a tendency to regard the teaching of experience as the enemy of progress, I cannot think that such views will commend themselves to this Conference. On the contrary, all real progress must obviously be based upon experience and upon that

wisdom which, like freedom, "broadens down from precedent to precedent." And there is probably no other question which has so much experience behind it, or which has had so much attention bestowed upon it through the ages as this question of the relief of poverty at all times and in all countries.

It is of some interest, in view of the ferment of opinion that is going on with regard to the subject in the Christian Churches of the present day, to notice that the principle of voluntary almsgiving was strongly embraced in the early Christian Church. On the other hand, in the Jewish Church the principle of compulsory tithe was adopted. St Irenæus, in comparing the two systems, speaks of the one as "the charity of freemen, the other the charity of slaves." In England the Church accepted the responsibility for the relief of the poor upon a voluntary basis up to the end of the fifteenth century, though it is plain that after the Reformation, and as the Church gradually lost its hold upon the laity, the financial difficulty increased. By an Act of Edward VI. collectors were appointed in every parish, whose duty it was "gently to ask and demand of every man and woman what they of their charity would be contented to give weekly for the relief of the poor"; and in the event of "froward refusal" the bishops and clergy were "gently to exhort and persuade" such recusants, and, in the last resort, to apply such disciplinary methods as were possible. The final step from moral suasion to legislative coercion was taken in the Elizabethan Poor Laws, which were codified in the great Act of 1601, and the principle of a compulsory levy, to be enforced by distraint and imprisonment, was for the first time adopted. Under that Act the State assumes the whole responsibility for "the relief of the impotent, and the setting to work of those able to work," and voluntary charity obtains no recognition. Undoubtedly the Act appears to cover the whole ground, and it is probable that its authors believed that they had settled the problem of poverty once and for all. It remained

practically unchanged for 230 years, up to the passing of the Poor Law Amendment Act of 1834.

Within a few years of its enactment a flood of pamphlets and publications upon the question of poor relief began and continued through the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Sir F. Eden gives a list of some 300 of these, making all sorts of proposals for the improvement of the methods of dealing with the poor, and putting forward a host of schemes many of them almost identical with some of those proposed to-day. Upon three points they are unanimous, viz., as to the increasing misery of the poor, the increasing burden of taxation, and the failure of the existing law. They differ, indeed, as to the causes of the evil, some ascribing it to the law itself, others to the administration of the law. They are marked throughout by a strong vein of humanity, and amongst their writers may be found the names of the best men of the day, whose names are familiar even now to all of us, such as Daniel Defoe, Samuel Richardson, Henry Fielding, John Locke, author of the "Essay on the Human Understanding," and these names are sufficient indication that the best brains of two centuries applied themselves to the subject. It is impossible to do more than glance at a few of these pamphlets. In 1622 we have one entitled "Grievous Grones of the poor by a well wisher who wisheth that the poore of England might be so provided for that none need go a begging": in 1646 "Stanleyes Remedy wherein is shown that Sodomes sin of idleness is the poverty and misery of this Kingdom": in 1673 a pamphlet entitled "The grand concern of the nation explained," and which estimates the poor rate at £840,000. "This (it says) is employed only to maintain idle persons; doth great harm rather than good; makes a world of poqr more than there would otherwise have been . . . men and women growing so proud and idle that they will not work, but lie upon the parish where they dwell for maintenance." Sir Matthew Hale says pithily of the Act of Elizabeth: "The plaister is not so

large as the sore." Dr Davenant in his political essays contends that "the Poor Laws seem only to encourage vice and sloth in the nation." John Locke sums up in 1697 the opinion of the time as follows: "The multiplying of the poor and the increase of the poor rate has proceeded neither from scarcity of provisions nor from want of employment since God has blessed these times with plenty . . . it can be nothing else but the relaxation of discipline and the corruption of manners." A hundred years later Lord Kames, the well-known Scottish judge, says: "If it should be reported of a foreign nation that the burden of maintaining the idle and profligate is laid upon the frugal and industrious, what should we say of such a nation? yet this is literally true in England." Finally we have the monumental work of "Eden on the Poor," which is the standard authority for the earlier history of the Poor Law.

Throughout the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries the utmost dissatisfaction prevailed, but it was not till 1782 that the crisis came when, by Gilbert's Act, outdoor relief was made obligatory for all except the sick and impotent. From that time forward the onrush of pauperism became fast and furious. The rates, which in 1785 were under £2,000,000, by 1817 were nearly £8,000,000. In many country villages practically the whole population was on the rates. In my own, for instance, where there were last year just nine indoor and nine outdoor paupers for the whole year, costing about £200, the old poor books show that in the year 1831 there were 127 separate grants of relief *for a single month*, and that for the whole year the expenditure was nearly £1000. Similar conditions prevailed all over the country. Of the deplorable condition of the poor there can be no doubt. It is testified to, *passim*, by contemporary writers such as Arthur Young, William Cobbett, and Harriet Martineau. It remained for another generation to find the remedy.

And so we see that the Elizabethan Poor Law, which had set out with such a comprehensive programme for

"the relief of the impotent and the setting of the able-bodied to work"—a programme covering the whole field of the relief of poverty—had broken down. And that not because there had been parsimony of expenditure—the increase of the rates precludes such a suggestion—but because its authors had left out of consideration the elementary law that human nature, like everything in the physical world, follows the line of least resistance, and that so long as the State offers, or appears to offer, the means of subsistence upon easy terms, a large majority of the poorer population will shape their lives accordingly.

In 1834 came the celebrated Report of the Commissioners, a document doubtless familiar to every Guardian here. They, like earlier writers, ascribe the evil directly to demoralisation caused by the Poor Law, and they lay down two fundamental principles as essential to the administration of public relief—the first, that it should be limited to the relief of destitution, such destitution to be tested by the willingness to accept institutional relief; the second, that the position of the pauper should be "less eligible" than that of the poor workman who supports himself, and has to contribute to the rates and taxes. Outside these limits the relief of the poor was to be left to voluntary charity. After the agitation against the new Poor Law, a long-continued and violent one, had subsided, for the next forty years there was a period of quietude. Outdoor relief to the able-bodied had been abolished, subject to certain limitations, and in forty years the workhouses were practically clear of able-bodied men. In the sixties there was fresh reaction against strict administration, and a huge increase of outdoor relief: certain Boards of Guardians in East London and elsewhere were besieged by threatening crowds of applicants, and sat under police protection. There was an enormous increase both in pauperism and expenditure. Once more the public became alarmed, and the Poor Law Board issued the well-known Memorandum of 1869, by which the respective functions of public and

private relief were officially defined, and the necessity of bringing about a co-operation between the two agencies was for the first time officially enunciated. "The question arises," it says, "how far it is possible to mark out the separate limits of Poor Law and charity. One of the most recognised principles in our Poor Law is that relief should only be given to the actually destitute, and not in aid of wages, and this lies at the root of our present system of relief. . . . Nothing could be more mischievous both to the working classes and the ratepayers than to supplement insufficiency of wages by the grant of public money." Such a policy is fatal, for the further reason that it "allows a belief in a legal claim to public money, in every emergency, to supplant in a further portion of the population the recognition of the necessity for self-reliance and thrift." This latter class can best be dealt with by charitable people, "whose alms could in no case be claimed as a right." It deprecates, accordingly, the supplementation of Poor Law relief by charity, and recommends that charity should confine itself to such cases, and such forms of relief, as cannot properly be given by the Poor Law, each agency assuming the whole responsibility for its own department of the work. As a practical suggestion, it advocates co-operation between Guardians and charitable agencies with a view to the co-ordination of relief work together with the registration of relief in every district, the interchange of lists of those helped, and other means of attaining the objects aimed at. The Circular remains the standing authoritative and official declaration upon the subject before us. I hope that the slight sketch of the circumstances preceding it may be sufficient to indicate the reasons for its issue and the principles upon which it is based. This Circular induced a few Boards of Guardians, the names of which are already familiar to these Conferences, to remodel their methods upon the lines suggested at the time, and a few more have since approximated to it, but the vast majority remained unaffected. Where its recommendations

were adopted a great decrease of pauperism was the immediate result, and where they have been adhered to pauperism has been kept at a low level. But in several cases there has been a reaction.

Apart from that, it cannot be said that the Circular has had much recognition, even from later Presidents of the Local Government Board, and all the tendency, both legislative and administrative, has been to extend widely the responsibilities of the State in regard to poor relief. Whilst in the last twenty years the Poor Law expenditure has about doubled itself, much of the relief of the poor has been taken outside the Poor Law altogether. Mr Chamberlain's Circular of 1886, by which vestries and borough councils were instructed to find work for the unemployed, was the thin end of the wedge which has opened the way to the Unemployed Workmen Act, and to much that is to come. The State has once more accepted the responsibility for "setting the poor to work," which it took upon itself by the Elizabethan Poor Law, and from which it shook itself free in 1834. The Provision of Meals Act and the Government Old Age Pensions Bill, which is probably in print by this time, are further departures from the principles laid down by the Circular of 1869.

And now, perhaps, I may be allowed to call your attention to certain principles underlying the whole question, the first of which is the effect that relief has upon character, and the special dangers of State relief. Indiscriminate charity is, of course, an unmixed evil, but it differs from State relief in that it can never be looked upon as a right, that it has definite limits, and that it cannot be used to anything like the same extent as a means of political bribery: if it is so, the person who makes use of it has at least to bear the cost himself, and that alone sets a limit to its extension. But the crucial danger of State relief is that it comes to be looked upon as a right, and as a means of evading the troubles and responsibilities of life, and that it tends to remove life's

discipline, by which alone character is made. We had two hundred and thirty years of the old Poor Law, under which State relief was carried to its utmost limits, and at the end of it the ruin of the poor and of the country was nearly complete. The problem of pauperism is, I think, very little understood, and its magnitude insufficiently recognised. It is not a question of people being "deserving or undeserving." Many a pauper is neither vicious nor criminal, whilst many who are both vicious and criminal are not paupers. The question is one which lies deep in human nature. There are pauper rich as well as pauper poor. Pauperism means the deadening of effort, ambition, self-respect, and self-reliance, following on the relaxation of the law of self-preservation. As an old writer says, "Men have nothing to stir them to labour but their wants, which it is wisdom to relieve but folly to cure." The question is an economic one, the corollary of the weakness of average human nature, from which the poor are no more exempt than the rich. It is because it is the uniform experience both in this and other countries that State relief saps the foundations of human effort that many of us regard its extension, in spite of all past history, with the utmost apprehension.

The next great principle is that State relief is certain eventually to diminish and even to dry up the springs of private charity, and that we must make our election between them. It is sufficiently obvious that people will not do that of their own accord for which they are already taxed. The Unemployed Workmen Act was based upon the voluntary principle; already voluntary subscriptions, in London at least, have dwindled and almost disappeared, and it is plain that if the Act is to be continued the cost must fall entirely on the rates and the Imperial Exchequer. The same will probably take place with regard to the Provision of Meals Act. The burden of the rates is often made the reason for refusal to subscribe to a charity. In France, at the time of the French Revolution and later, charity was proscribed by

law and a project "for the organisation of national relief based upon the rights of man" substituted for it, and private charity practically ceased to exist. Nor did it raise its head again until the "project" broke down owing to national bankruptcy, when it was once more obliged to come to the rescue. But the effect of State relief upon the charity of the public is as dust in the balance compared with that which it has in displacing another kind of charity, which is far more widely diffused and all-pervading. I refer to that natural and unseen charity which is the cement of society, which has no place in advertisement or subscription lists, and which has been well compared to "hidden springs, the existence of which is only divined by the greenness of the turf overhead." Such charity consists in the performance of natural obligations, in the mutual sympathy and kindness and sense of duty of relation to relation, neighbour to neighbour, and friend to friend. Charity of this kind is a repairing force, which operates naturally and almost automatically, which blesses him that gives and him that takes, and which is based upon all that is best in human nature. How great a force it is, is little appreciated by modern social reformers. Yet it is not difficult to dislocate and displace it. Under the old Poor Law it had almost disappeared. "Pauperism," say the Commissioners, "is an engine for disconnecting each member of a family from the others, and of reducing all to a state of domesticated animals, fed, lodged, and provided for by the parish, without mutual dependence or mutual interest." And even to-day no Guardian or worker amongst the poor can fail to know how constantly, when the parish pension comes in at the door, the allowance from relative or friend flies out at the window, and how ceaseless is the struggle to throw off natural responsibilities and duties upon the rates.

We have, then, to make up our minds upon which principle we shall rely for the remedial relief of poverty, subject always to the condition, upon which all are agreed,

that the necessities of life must be provided for everyone who is in need of them, without regard to the causes of that need. In the first place, voluntary charity has this to commend it—that it is contributed by those who can best afford it, and that in most cases, at all events, its motive force is sympathy and goodwill. State relief, on the other hand, is enforced by the blunt methods of the broker's man, and is often exacted from people who are poor themselves, and the fact of compulsion robs it of its virtue. We know that the quality of mercy is not strained, and we are told that it drops "like the gentle dew from heaven." The rates, on the other hand, are forced out under strong pressure, and so far from dropping they have an invariable tendency to rise. Then, again, we may ask whether the resuscitated doctrines of the French Revolution, which form the chief stock-in-trade of the more advanced advocates of State relief, will bear examination from an ethical point of view; whether, quite apart from the question of pauperisation, they are having a wholesome effect upon those whom they propose to benefit; or whether, in fact, they are exciting in them most of the passions prohibited by the Decalogue and by Christian teaching. William Cobbett ("Rural Rides," p. 201) says: "Poverty at its worst gives no man a right to view his neighbour with an evil eye, much less to do him a mischief." He was one of the first of the social reformers. From his successors we hear no such sentiments. It is time that we should "clear our minds from cant" upon these questions. Many doctrines of the grossest materialism, and which, one is tempted to add, are purely predatory, are now put forward in the name of Christ by people who frankly tell us that they have no belief in the divinity of Christ, and who perhaps in the same breath are heaping curses upon Christian charity. A French writer of many years ago, replying to similar controversialists, says: "Should we, for the rest, take seriously the admiration that the writers on this side profess for Christianity, or accept the quotations that they borrow from it, as

anything but arguments *ad hominem*? They do not hide sufficiently what is at the back of their minds on this point; they seem to say, 'as for us, we have long ago known how we stand in regard to these antiquated traditions; but do you, who still believe, listen to their witness in favour of our doctrine.'" But there is another party of whose religious convictions there can be no question, who are also taking a prominent part in the discussion of these questions, but whose attitude is somewhat ambiguous. I refer to the Christian Socialists, of whom I hope some may be present to-day to take part in the discussion. The early Christian Socialists—Maurice, Kingsley, and others—were, so far as I know, not State Socialists at all. Their contention, as I understand it, was that it is the duty of Christians to concern themselves with the material welfare of the masses, a contention with which all will agree; but they give no hint of action by the State. There can be no doubt, however, that a large section of the Christian Socialists of the present day look mainly to the State for the accomplishment of their objects, and especially for this great object of the relief of poverty. I read the other day in the "Times" a pastoral letter addressed by two eminent bishops, one of them the President of the C.S.U., to their clergy upon the subject of Churchmen's duty towards social questions, a pastoral admirable in tone and sentiment, and one with which every one must be in substantial agreement. But towards the end there was a sentence which made me pause to think whether it did not lend a tone to the whole of the document. It was to this effect: The clergy are invited to exhort their flocks "to pay their rates cheerfully." Now, cheerfulness is unfortunately a thing that we cannot command, and I am doubtful whether the "gentle exhortations" of bishops and clergy would in that respect be more efficacious in 1908 than they were in the reign of Edward VI. I have never yet met anyone who paid his rates cheerfully. But I will go further, and say that if I lived in certain parts of London, and possibly even else-

where, I should be justified in a gentle grumble against my rates. Quite lately there has appeared a manifesto, signed by one hundred clergy and ministers whom I may perhaps without disrespect call "whole hoggers," who write as Christian Socialists, and assert that Christian Socialism accepts in its entirety the Socialist programme. It remains to be seen whether they represent the main body of Christian Socialism. It is satisfactory that the issues are gradually clearing themselves.

But, of course, there is much more which might be said as to the distinction between State relief and private charity. Charity means much more than money-giving. It is often more charitable to give no money at all. Charity implies personal endeavour and self-sacrifice, thought and watchfulness, and a thousand conditions which can never be satisfied by monetary payments. Freewill was the basis of the charity of the early Church, the charity of freemen, not the charity of slaves. Under which banner will the Christian Churches of the twentieth century take their stand?

Another feature of unrestricted State relief remains to be noticed. First, the demands upon it increase by a sort of arithmetical progression; the State purse is supposed to be bottomless, and the number of those who wish to dip into it are without limit—and then there comes a breakdown. It was so in Rome: it was so again and again in France during the Revolutionary period and after: it was so in England in 1834. It has been so of late in some parts of London and elsewhere. Either the municipal worm is sucked dry and remains an anæmic and unprofitable corpse, or he turns and rends his persecutors. Then comes a cry for transferring the charges to the Imperial Exchequer: believe me, the Imperial Exchequer is no more bottomless than the municipal purse, and even now the position of our national finances is a grave one. All past experience shows that sooner or later the reaction comes, usually just in time to save irretrievable disaster, and that then the

unhappy people who have learnt to lean upon State relief are left to face the world destitute of all reserves and bereft of their only real resources, namely, those that lie in their own industry and prudence.

We now come to the question whether the alternative policy contained in the Circular of 1869 is a possible one or no? I am prepared to be told that such a policy is antiquated and obsolete, and I certainly do not expect that those who talk of "the curse of charity" will subscribe to it. But after all they are, I think, still in a small minority and have not the nation with them: neither do I believe that the wisdom of the ages is concentrated in the year 1908, and that everything that has gone before it must be disregarded. The plain facts are these, that in London, where the Poor Law expenditure is some £3,000,000, the income of charities available for the Metropolis is about £8,000,000. That does not, of course, include the personal almsgiving of the community, which must be of enormous volume, nor does it include the still more important factor of that natural charity which I have referred to also as the repairing force of society, and which is the outcome of family and neighbourly sympathy and affection. I have no figures for the great provincial cities, but it is a well-known fact that most of them have large charitable endowments, whilst there is no reason to believe that they are behindhand in the other forms of charity. Is it impossible so to reorganise and reform this huge volume of charitable relief, which is at present largely indiscriminate and working upon no settled lines or policy, in such a manner as to make it really effective in dealing with distress which, as the Circular says, "can best be dealt with by charitable people"? Is it impossible to bring about co-operation between charity and the Poor Law upon the lines indicated? The answer is that it is not impossible, because it has already been done in several places both in town and country, and the experiment has stood the test of thirty years. But has it been attended by special hardships to the poor? all that can be

said is that its opponents, who are neither few nor incapable of expressing themselves, have never been able to prove it, and that the beneficial effects of the new Poor Law, upon which this policy is based, have never been open to question. And from which districts do we hear the loudest cries of distress and destitution? It is precisely from those districts where its recommendations have been uniformly set at naught and defied. The present time is an opportune one for considering the whole question *de novo*, because lately a number of "guilds of help" and the like have sprung up all over England. If these guilds of help can succeed in drawing together the charitable forces of their district and making them really effective, and if they will work with the Guardians as recommended by the Circular, the battle will be more than half won. A word of caution is perhaps necessary: the relief of distress is coming more and more to be recognised as a scientific problem which can only be solved by the combination of study with practical work; and if these guilds of help are to make any real progress, if they are not to be for ever rolling a stone uphill, they must qualify themselves for their duties by preliminary training; otherwise they will only make the position worse than it was before. In country districts the conditions are different from those in towns, and the question of bringing about co-operation between charity and the Poor Law assumes a rather different aspect, yet even there the experience of several Unions shows that it is not impossible. All experience, moreover, shows that a careful administration of the Poor Law gives such a stimulus to the friendly society movement that the problem is reduced within much narrower limits, and, speaking as one born and bred in the country myself, I believe that the hard cases might without difficulty be met by private charity. Even now, and especially in places where the Poor Law is carefully administered, many employers of labour either pension their old employees who have served them faithfully and well,

or provide for them light and nominal work by, as Mr Charles Booth says, "a kindly social usage." On the other hand, when a large amount of outdoor relief is given, they often, as a matter of course, send them off for the usual parish half-a-crown. Though there may be difficulties in some districts, I cannot believe but that in many it would be possible to carry out the principles of the Circular much more generally than is now the case.

Finally, we have the question of the effect that the enormous increase in the burden of public relief is likely to have upon the working classes themselves. Mr Morley has told us that "the burden of taxation, however disguised, falls at last most heavily upon the shoulders of the industrial classes." We have heard lately of the removal of Messrs Yarrow's works from London owing to the incidence of the rates; whether that was the real cause or not it is unnecessary to ask, but it is sufficiently obvious that industry will tend to leave districts where it is heavily burdened, and we may ask whether the large amount of unemployment prevailing, especially in those districts where the burden of taxation is heaviest, is not due to some extent to this cause. Then, again, there is the increase in the cost of living, and especially of house-room, which is the direct result of heavy taxation. It has of late been denied that this falls upon the occupier. It may at once be granted that in the long run, when the demand for houses declines, it falls upon the landlord, but it is equally undeniable that the landlord will shift the burden on to the occupier as long as he is able to do so. There have already been many cases in which the increased rates have been added to the rents. Speaking generally, heavy taxation cannot fail to hamper the industry by which the working classes are supported, and to increase the cost of living.

I will now try to summarise and make clear the points that I wish to bring before the Conference. The first of them is that unrestricted State relief has had a trial of

two hundred and thirty years in this country, and that, so far from relieving poverty and improving the condition of the poor, it nearly ruined both the poor and the country. The plaister has never been as large as the sore. I have endeavoured to show that the underlying cause of this is to be found in the fact that the authors of the Elizabethan Poor Law left out of consideration the factor of human nature: in support of my contention, I have cited the authority of some of the wisest thinkers over two centuries. I could have cited many more if time had allowed. Next I have tried to show the gradually growing conviction, which found expression in the new Poor Law, that there must be some restriction or element of deterrence in public relief which comes to be looked upon as a right, as an alternative to a general pauperism.

In discussing the Circular of 1869, which is, in fact, a restatement of the position adopted by the Commissioners of 1834, I have endeavoured to show the respective characteristics of State relief enforced by distraint and imprisonment, and of voluntary charity, the burden of which is borne by those best able to afford and which has the virtue of spontaneity. I have urged, also, that State relief is destructive of voluntarism, and that the latter is of altogether different quality, and more in accordance with the teaching of Christianity. I have also tried to show that the policy advocated by the Circular of 1869 is a possible one.

Finally, I have contended that State relief is, as Carlyle said, "a broken reed to lean upon, if ever there was one, and one which does but run into the lamed right hand," not only because it lames the right hand, though of that there is abundant proof, but because it breaks down owing to exhaustion of the exchequer, whether local or imperial, and certain reaction; meanwhile, the burden of increasing taxation falls most heavily upon the working classes themselves, by handicapping the sources of their subsistence.

These are the points which I wish to place before the

Conference. I hope that they may be fully discussed and categorically answered, and that those who disagree with what I have said will face the issues fairly and squarely. Let me suggest that the whole question remains as it was in 1673—the “Grand Concern of the Nation.”

APPENDIX II

SOME RECENT DEVELOPMENTS OF POOR RELIEF

A FEW years ago it was possible to ascertain by a glance at the statistics of the Local Government Board the exact position of the country in regard to the public relief of the poor, and to answer with certainty the vital question as to what proportion of the poorer population lives by its labour, and what proportion lives by some sort of State subsidy. There was then practically no form of public relief which was not included in those statistics, and the greatest importance was attached to their accurate keeping in order that the nation might, at any time, take stock of the position by the light of evidence which was both clear and comprehensive. But this is no longer possible. The official statistics of pauperism now cover only a portion of the ground. The movement known as "the break-up of the Poor Law" has set in with increasing rapidity within the last few years, and to-day some four or five different bodies administer public relief where there was one before. These bodies work almost entirely independently of one another and overlap in many directions. Their finance and accounts are, of course, quite separate, and no attempt is made to bring the relief that they administer into a common account, although in fact they distribute as much relief as the Poor Law itself. We are therefore in the position that we have at present two Poor Laws, the one of which is guided by certain principles based upon past experience, and keeps careful statistics

both of its expenditure and of the number of people dealt with, whilst the other is guided by no such principles and its statistics are confused with those of other branches of administration.

The principal Acts by means of which this "break-up" has been effected are the Unemployed Workmen Act of 1905, the Provision of Meals Act of 1906, the Old Age Pensions Act of 1908, and the (Education) Administrative Provisions Act of 1907. An appreciable amount of relief is also administered by Borough Councils under various Acts dealing with public health. The Home Office has been making excursions in the same direction through its Reformatory and Industrial Schools, and the late Home Secretary even proposed to give to the police the duty of seeing to the clothing of ragged children in London, as is already done in several important provincial towns. One effect of this break-up of the Poor Law has been that the total public expenditure for the relief of the poor has in the last twenty-five years risen from about £8,000,000 to approximately £30,000,000. The last Annual Report of the Local Government Board shows that Poor Law expenditure was £15,000,000, whilst about £12,000,000 was spent under the Old Age Pensions Act, and £183,500 under the Unemployed Workmen Act. To this must be added an, at present, unascertained sum expended under the Provision of Meals Act, whilst a fresh movement, of which it is impossible to foresee the ultimate results, has been started for the provision of medical relief to school children under the (Education) Administrative Provision Act of 1907. No one appears to have the least idea as to what the cost of the Insurance Act is likely to be.

Meanwhile the whole tone of public opinion upon questions of poor relief appears to have changed. At one time it favoured thrift and self-reliance, and self-support was held to be more creditable than dependence upon public funds. Now all this is altered. Old age pensioners, many at least of whom might have provided for their own old age by reasonable prudence in their earlier years, are

designated without distinction as the "veterans of labour." Since the removal of the pauper disqualification a good many people who have been in receipt of parochial relief for years have become these veterans of labour, and have obtained, or are qualifying for, an old age pension. The able-bodied unemployed are now promised "honourable" maintenance. We are asked to abolish the last "stigma" of the Poor Law by doing away with the word "pauper." The electoral disqualification has been removed in the case of outdoor medical relief. Schemes of Poor Law reform are in the air, which all tend to make the receipt of relief more honourable and more acceptable.

The object of this paper is to examine the relations of these various forms of public relief to one another, and to watch their general tendency. We will take them in order under their several heads :—

The Unemployed Workmen Act, 1905.

This Act was the direct outcome of Mr Chamberlain's Circular of 1886, by which local bodies were instructed to give work, outside the Poor Law, to the better class of workman "ordinarily in work and temporarily unemployed." The Circular, intended for a special occasion, was issued again and again by his successors at the Local Government Board, and for twenty years vestries and other local bodies were occupied in trying to make work for the unemployed. It is of special importance because it made the first breach in the unity of the Poor Law. The work given was quite inadequate, often only amounting to one or two days a week, and it was found to interfere with the work of those ordinarily employed by the local authorities. Meanwhile a generation was brought up to look to the vestries for employment-relief, and crowds gathered, winter after winter, round the offices of the local authorities, demanding it. Ultimately the position became intolerable, and in 1905 the Unemployed Workmen Act was passed as an attempt to regularise this relief, and to liberate the local authorities

from the pressure. It has undoubtedly had this last effect, but it has only transferred the difficulty elsewhere. The Central Unemployed Body has since 1905 issued five reports, and these reports show:—

(1) That the vast majority of those applying have been casual labourers and certainly not those for whom the Act was intended;

(2) That the work provided has done nothing to permanently improve the position of those who have received it, and that the same people apply year after year;

(3) That it has been impossible to provide work for more than a very small proportion of those who apply.

Though, by the Unemployed Workmen Act, the period for which work is given has been extended from the odd days previously given to a maximum period of sixteen weeks, it is none the less a form of casual employment which the casual labourer comes to look upon as part of his normal means of subsistence. The last Annual Report of the Central Body shows that there were 51·3 per cent. of recurrent applications. The same people are also being assisted at other times, in a large proportion of cases, by the Poor Law, or their children are being fed by the Education Authority. In a return for a single district which was presented to the Royal Commission on the Poor Law it was shown that of 437 cases assisted by the Distress Committee, 234 were already known to the Guardians, and 81 again resorted to the Poor Law. These figures may be taken as fairly typical of the conditions prevailing elsewhere. It was pointed out when the Unemployed Workmen Act was under consideration that its effect would probably be to increase and perpetuate the evils of casual labour. In fact, it has established 23 schools of casual labour in London and nearly 150 in the whole country. When the Act was passed the hope was held out that the work given would be provided by voluntary subscription. Mr Long, addressing a meeting at the Local Government Board shortly before the Act

was passed, expressly stated that under no circumstances could a Government grant be made for the purpose. But very soon, as is always the case under similar conditions, voluntaryism was driven from the field, and a year or two later Mr Burns had to promise a grant of £200,000. Again, the Act, like Mr Chamberlain's Circular, was intended for times of exceptional distress. It has now become the normal procedure of the winter months.

The Provision of Meals Act, 1906.

Here again the hope was held out that the meals would be provided by voluntary subscription, and much opposition was disarmed thereby; but permissive power was given to charge them upon the rates. For two years the L. C. C., which had a small and precarious "Municipal Reform" majority, relied upon voluntary associations such as the "London School Dinners Association," but in December, 1908, Socialist pressure became too strong, and the cost was thrown upon the rates. Since then the average number of children fed weekly has gone up from 29,000 to 42,000 and the number of meals provided from 74,000 to 203,000.¹ There is now a strong agitation to feed the children during the school holidays. But, further, the hope was held out that it would be possible to recover a large part of the cost from neglectful parents. The expenditure last year was £88,000, and the amount recovered was £510. This is of special interest, because now there are large schemes of Poor Law reform in the air which are based upon the principle of "charge and recovery." We may form some opinion from these figures as to what the prospects would be if they were carried into effect.

(Education) Administrative Provisions Act, 1907.

This Act provided, for the first time, for the medical inspection of all children in public elementary schools.

¹ Ann. Report of L. C. C., 1910, vol. iv., p. 38.

Previously only abnormal children had been so inspected. An immediate result was the increase of the medical staff of the Education Committee from twenty-seven full or part time doctors, and thirty-two school nurses, to one hundred and thirteen doctors and eighty-nine nurses. But the Act gives the power "to make arrangements for attending to the health and physical condition of the children," and inspection inevitably led at once to the provision of treatment for children found to be physically ailing. The precedents of the Unemployed Workmen Act and of the Provision of Meals Act have been closely followed, in that the L. C. C. are attempting in the first instance to provide treatment through voluntary charity, and have entered into arrangements with the great hospitals upon the basis of a contribution by the public body in respect of the children treated. But there is already strong pressure for the establishment of rate-supported school clinics, and it remains to be seen how long this pressure can be resisted. Praiseworthy attempts are being made to throw the responsibility for this treatment upon the parents and to recover part of the cost, but the ultimate responsibility for ensuring that the children receive treatment rests with the public authority, whether the parents pay or whether they do not. The School Care Committees bear the chief burden of the work—"the responsibility for securing that appropriate action is taken in every case devolves upon them."¹ They have to classify the cases according to their nature, and to assess the parents' payments under the Act of 1909. "Considerable difficulties have arisen in connection with this part of the work, and steps are being taken to introduce a method of assessment less complicated than that originally introduced."² This method, which has now been decided on, provides for a maximum payment of 1s. and a minimum of 1d. In 1910, though the scheme had hardly yet begun, the cost of this medical inspection and treatment amounted to £26,880, whilst the amount

¹ Ann. Report of L. C. C., 1910, vol. iv., p. 43. ² *Ibid.*, p. 43.

recovered was £329. There are many who prophesy that the minimum charge of 1d. will soon become the maximum. It is significant, moreover, that already "arrangements are being made for remitting the charge in necessitous cases,"¹ whilst in another place we find that no hard-and-fast rule for determining necessity has been adopted by the Council."² The Council are thus already face to face with the old difficulty of a test. But as yet they hardly appear conscious that there is such a difficulty, either in regard to the means of the parents or to the actual needs of the child. "There is (they say) no absolute standard of what is, and what is not, healthy nutrition. *Necessitous children are not necessarily ill-nourished, at the time of application for aid, though they would become so if relief were withheld.*"³ The italics are ours.

The difficulty of collecting the small sums required under the assessment is enormous. A story is told of a collector who climbed twelve times to the top floor of some model dwellings to collect one penny, and sooner than attempt it a thirteenth time, paid it himself. It appears from all this that we are within sight of free medical treatment in all cases where the parents are unable or unwilling to pay.

It is estimated that some 30,000 children were satisfactorily treated under the above arrangements in 1910. The parents are not altogether satisfied, as they consider in some cases that they are deprived of the free treatment at hospitals to which they have been accustomed, and they resent the X-ray treatment for ringworm, and the provision of spectacles which they believe prejudice their children's chances of getting work. A large extension of the system is foreshadowed in regard to dental treatment. "It is evident that the needs of London will have to be met by special provision for the work."⁴ In regard to medical treatment generally there appears to be no

¹ Ann. Report of L. C. C., 1910, vol. iv., p. 48.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 35.

² *Ibid.*, p. 35.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 48.

system of co-operation with the Poor Law, and yet in 1911 no less than 111,000 outdoor medical orders were issued in London, many of which were undoubtedly for children of school age. Is it not time that the matter should be considered from this point of view?

The Education Officer commences his report thus:—
 “Formerly (he says) education was in the main confined to (1) the growth of character; (2) the growth of the mind. Now education looks increasingly at the social problems that present themselves for solution in the case of the individual child, the problem of physical deterioration, of under-feeding, of impoverished homes and unsuitable employment. The State has come to see that it is not enough to impart knowledge, but that it must also see that the child is capable of assimilating that knowledge and that his environment is such that it will not entirely undo the effect of the school training.” This is a startling definition of the scope of education as coming from a body such as the L. C. C.; the new development is referred to euphemistically as the “widening” of education; in fact, it may easily be made to cover the entire State maintenance of children.

The Old Age Pensions Act, 1908, and its Effect upon the Poor Law.

The Old Age Pensions Act came into force on 1st January 1909, and the pauper disqualification was removed on 1st January 1911. The Local Government Board have published a return (Cd. 5612) showing the number of paupers transferred to the pension list in the month of January, 1911. The transfer was practically complete by the end of the third week. The table on the next page shows the number of indoor and outdoor paupers remaining in each London Union on 21st January 1911, and the number of these who were transferred to the pension list during the month. This will enable us to form some opinion as to the situation at that time.

STATEMENT of the Number of Persons in Receipt of Relief on Saturday, 21st January 1911, and the Number of Paupers transferred to the Pension List during January.

Union or Parish.	Popula- tion.	Paupers not Transferred.		Paupers Transferred.	
	Census, 1911.	Indoor.	Outdoor.	Indoor.	Outdoor.
<i>West District—</i>					
Paddington . . .	143,976	1,995	378	15	131
Kensington . . .	176,628	2,631	173	48	114
Hammersmith . . .	112,239	1,348	848	10	236
Fulham . . .	137,289	1,677	316	41	109
Chelsea . . .	73,842	1,630	136	13	134
St George's . . .	128,256	2,705	488	35	208
Westminster . . .	33,081	693	88	5	21
Total for West District .	805,311	12,379	2,427	167	953
<i>North District—</i>					
St Marylebone . . .	133,301	3,446	316	36	157
Hampstead . . .	81,942	570	128	6	54
St Pancras . . .	235,317	4,387	1,336	53	408
Islington . . .	334,991	5,111	4,913	92	1,286
Hackney . . .	270,519	3,687	1,994	39	587
Total for North District	1,056,070	17,201	8,587	226	2,292
<i>Central District—</i>					
St Giles and St George .	31,436	965	111	11	45
Strand . . .	21,674	1,293	96	14	38
Holborn . . .	128,691	3,800	1,222	40	463
City of London . . .	27,664	836	130	4	55
Total for Central District	209,465	6,894	1,559	69	601
<i>East District—</i>					
Shoreditch . . .	118,637	2,717	680	27	237
Bethnal Green . . .	129,680	2,682	198	59	149
Whitechapel . . .	78,768	1,722	22	13	1
St George-in-the-East .	49,068	1,231	18	13	0
Stepney . . .	57,937	1,833	146	29	84
Mile End Old Town .	112,827	1,792	794	30	309
Poplar Borough . . .	168,822	4,169	3,633	33	984
Total for East District .	715,739	16,146	5,491	205	1,764
<i>South District—</i>					
Southwark . . .	206,180	5,281	2,030	52	499
Bermondsey . . .	130,760	3,189	2,048	21	632
Lambeth . . .	301,895	4,330	1,888	77	787
Wandsworth . . .	400,941	4,778	1,312	58	616
Camberwell . . .	259,339	4,093	3,672	21	1,036
Greenwich . . .	189,034	3,132	1,468	47	556
Lewisham . . .	134,721	1,434	1,325	11	322
Woolwich . . .	131,086	1,665	1,018	12	197
Total for South District	1,749,956	27,902	14,671	309	4,655
Total for London . . .	4,536,541	80,822	32,825	1,168	10,265

The table shows that 1168 indoor and 10,265 outdoor paupers were so transferred, whilst there still remained 80,822 indoor paupers and 32,825 outdoor; that is to say, practically the whole of the indoor paupers and two-thirds of the outdoor. Still the official figures of outdoor pauperism naturally showed at once a large decrease, though this decrease loses its significance because we know that these 11,000 paupers have only been transferred to another form of relief. But a fresh tendency at once revealed itself. It is pointed out in the half-yearly return of pauperism for 1st January 1911, that already there were 3554 more people under 70 in receipt of relief than on 1st January 1910, and this tendency continues. A recent return for the Lambeth Union shows that at the date of the return there were about 200 more outdoor poor under 70 than at the corresponding period of the previous year, and this was ascribed primarily to the operation of the Old Age Pensions Act. Nor is it difficult to understand the reason: Guardians who are prone to give out-relief, finding that the people over seventy have been taken off the rates, are by no means loth to fill their places with younger people. Moreover, there is always now the almost irresistible plea that people should be kept out of the workhouse for a year or two until the old age pension becomes due.

Truly in all this we see the irony of fate. We were told that old age pensions would empty our workhouses and save an enormous expenditure upon Poor Law relief. Mr Charles Booth assured us that it would be possible to do away with out-relief altogether. We were told, moreover, that the grant of a pension at seventy would be a strong incentive to self-maintenance until that age was reached; and now we find our workhouses nearly as full as ever, whilst the places of those transferred from outdoor relief to the pension list are being filled by those under seventy. So far from the pension being an inducement to self-maintenance in earlier years, the fact that a pension is due shortly is made a reason for asking for

out-relief in the interim. And so relief is made to breed relief. But a further irony of fate remains to be recorded. When the Old Age Pensions Act was passed the greatest stress was laid upon the condition that old age pensioners or the "veterans of labour" should be entirely dissociated from all contact with the Poor Law. So much was this the case that the officers of excise were called upon to undertake the administration, and the very name of the relieving officer was anathema. But, in fact, a very large proportion of the pensioners continue to receive Poor Law relief, in many cases simultaneously with the receipt of their old age pension. In at least one London Union careful statistics have been kept since the Old Age Pensions Act came into operation, with the following result :—" 240 pensioners have received relief from the Guardians, and of this number 136 came into the workhouse or infirmary, twenty-nine received both indoor and outdoor medical relief, and seventy-five outdoor medical relief only. Many of these cases were relieved for unbroken periods, varying from six to twelve months. Several have been continuously receiving relief since taking their pension. In all these cases, except in six, when the pensioners came into the workhouse, they continued to receive their pension. One pensioner who had been admitted to the infirmary on five occasions stated that one reason for wishing to be admitted was in order to save money against his discharge. Some pensioners allowed their pensions to accumulate, whilst others allowed a relative or friend to draw the pension. Notwithstanding the Chancellor's statement that Guardians could get an officer nominated to receive the pension, every obstacle has been placed in their way by the Pension Authority, who apparently look upon the Guardians as a hostile authority. This lack of co-operation is most unfortunate. In one case a pensioner was admitted to the infirmary suffering from senile debility and in a verminous condition. The Relieving Officer found that he had been living with a woman much younger than himself, who retained

the pension book for her use. He reported the case to the Pension Officer, who said that it was 'no business of his.'" It is clear from reports received from all over the country that the conditions prevailing in this Union are by no means exceptional.¹

A return of the L.C.C. for the first quarter of 1911 showed that there were 60,500 pensioners in London at that date. This represents at a moderate estimate an addition of half a million to the cost of outdoor relief in the metropolis. The total out-relief for all classes in 1910 was only £307,231.

Certain other Forms of Relief outside the Poor Law.

But there still remains an appreciable amount of public relief administered by bodies other than Boards of Guardians. For example, many Borough Councils provide sanatorium relief. Some outside London have their own sanatoria. The L.C.C., in addition to the outdoor relief and medical treatment of school-children, maintain a large number of defective children in residential homes, where they are provided with board and lodging, of the cost of which the parents bear a very small proportion. Again, they spend a large sum—last year £128,000—in scholarships, or maintenance allowance for the children of poor parents, which cannot be ignored when we are considering the question of public expenditure upon relief. Neither can we leave out of consideration the Insurance Act, which came into operation in July, and which to the extent of "ninepence for fourpence" is admittedly eleemosynary. It is clear that this measure, whatever its advantages, must result in a large subsidy to the wages of the working classes.

¹ NOTE.—*Cf.* a recent report by the Committee of the Central Poor Law Conference and a report by Mr Rutherglen, Superintendent Relieving Officer to the Wandsworth Board of Guardians, October 1912.

Summary of the Position in regard to London.

On 1st January 1912 the total number of paupers in London, excluding lunatics and casuals, was 109,481. But to this 109,481 we must now add (say) 60,000 old age pensioners, an indefinite number of able-bodied men receiving relief on that day under the Unemployed Workmen Act, a weekly average of 40,000 children receiving meals under the Provision of Meals Act, an indefinite number of children receiving medical relief under the (Education) Administrative Provisions Act, and an indefinite number of people receiving public relief outside the Poor Law in other ways above indicated. These figures have now to be collected from some half-a-dozen different reports.

We have seen that as the result of the removal of the pauper disqualification there was a large transfer of outdoor paupers to the pension lists and corresponding reduction of pauperism; but that the present tendency is to fill the places of those transferred to the pension list with outdoor paupers under seventy. This tendency became especially marked in the third week of the Lady Day quarter of this year. If it continues we shall before long have as many outdoor paupers as before the disqualification was removed, and the old age pensioners and others into the bargain. It has been shown also that many pensioners are receiving Poor Law relief as well. In one Union it is reported that pensioners have discovered that they can supplement their pensions, which are notoriously inadequate, by continuous outdoor medical relief and nourishment, and that they do so systematically. Many others enter Poor Law infirmaries and receive their pensions as well, so that ratepayers and taxpayers pay for them twice over. Again, last year nearly 5000 able-bodied men received jobs of work from the Central Unemployed Body. But we have to consider the effect of the Act not only upon those who receive work, but also upon those who are encouraged to apply to the Distress

Committees, and we find that there were 25,268 applications, of which 51 per cent. were recurrent, that is to say, that the applicants had applied in former years. Only about one in five get work, and that of a casual nature. It is plain that many of them gravitate between Distress Committees and the Poor Law and various charities, whilst their children are fed at the schools. The general public is probably unaware of the wretched and precarious existence that is led by these unhappy victims of State bounty. Jobs of work, school dinners and the like, are in reality subsidies to the casual labourer, who is able to produce children much faster than the State can maintain them.

And so we have in London at the present time a lamentable confusion of relief. So far from one form of relief being the substitute for another, relief leads to more relief, and there is constant and continuous increase. There is little or no co-operation between the administering bodies, and no reasoned plan for dealing with the problem of poverty. Everything is piecemeal and chaotic. And as the result we have an ever-growing proletariat population, chiefly composed of casual labourers, who are maintained in turn (and sometimes simultaneously) by Poor Law Guardians, Distress Committees, Education and Health Authorities, and other public bodies. By the admission of everybody casual labour is one of the most crying evils of the day, and we meet it by establishing centres of casual labour all over the country. What is worst of all, perhaps, is that we are fast losing the power of taking stock of our position, because we bury public relief in the statistics of various branches of public administration and disguise it as education, public health, or the reward of industry.

We shall never get back to a healthier position until the public realise that the problem of public relief is the most difficult and critical that any nation has to deal with, and is one which requires the undivided and concentrated attention of the community as a separate branch of

administration. We have had many lessons in the past, and the question has engaged the attention of our best thinkers since the passing of the Act of Elizabeth. It is said now that the conditions have changed, and it is quite true that industry is far more complex than it was a hundred years ago. But the underlying problem is one of human nature, which remains the same as it has always been, and the magnitude and complexity of modern industrialism render the position far more dangerous than it has ever been before.

December 1912.

POSTSCRIPT (1914).

A good deal of water has passed under the bridges since the foregoing article was written. The National Insurance Act has come into force, and the benefits paid under it, whether in respect of sickness or of unemployment, have now to be added to the resources available for poor people in times of distress. Let us recapitulate these resources :—

(1) First there is the Poor Law (1601), with its work-houses, infirmaries, residential schools, and outdoor relief. In London we have in addition the numerous institutions of the Metropolitan Asylums Board.

(2) Next in order of time comes the Unemployed Workmen Act (1905), with its network of Distress Committees throughout the country, its Labour Colony at Hollesley Bay, and its system of allowances to the families of the men for whom it provides work.

(3) The Provision of Meals Act (1906) and the (Education) Administrative Provisions Act (1907) provide food and medical treatment for school children through the Education Authorities.

(4) The Old Age Pensions Act (1908) provides old age pensions for people over 70.

(5) The National Insurance Act provides benefits for

practically all people between 16 and 70 who come within the income-tax limit.

(6) There are also certain other forms of direct public relief. In many cases Borough Councils provide sanatorium relief, and give, from time to time, a considerable amount of employment relief. It may not be irrelevant to point out that nearly two millions of money has been returned to the pockets of the poorer classes by the abolition of school fees.

There is practically no co-ordination of, or co-operation between, these agencies. In the case of old age pensions co-operation is, as we have already seen, expressly vetoed. There have been a few sporadic attempts at co-operation in certain directions, but, generally speaking, it is safe to say that most of these agencies are in the dark as to what the others are doing, and that all the tendencies are towards isolated, rather than towards co-operative, action.

The natural and inevitable result is a huge mass of overlapping relief, which is administered as chance may direct. Even where these agencies are aware of each other's action, there is no plan of action for the permanent benefit of the people relieved. Indeed, it is not uncommon for relief by one agency to defeat the object of the relief given by another agency. It often happens that Guardians who are trying to get children away from bad home surroundings into the Poor Law schools find themselves powerless, because meals are being given at the elementary school. Moreover, the most unscrupulous and importunate beggars get most, whilst the most self-respecting people get least, even though their need may be greater. Fraud and deceit are encouraged, and the relief given is frequently misapplied. Meanwhile, the sum total of expenditure steadily increases, and the worse forms of poverty remain untouched.

The most extensive evidence of overlapping between the Old Age Pensions Act and the Poor Law is furnished by a recent report of the Central Committee of the Poor

Law Conference,¹ which is based upon information received from about 130 Unions in town and country, to which those who desire further information must be referred. Further corroboration is afforded by a remarkable memorandum recently presented to his Board by the Superintendent Relieving Officer of the Wandsworth Union. The memorandum is too long for quotation here, but the substance of it is contained in a paper upon "Old Age Pensions and the Poor Law," which may be obtained from Mr W. G. Lewis, publisher to the Central Poor Law Conference.

It is not only difficult, but impossible, for any individual to obtain comprehensive evidence upon a subject where the field of inquiry is so wide. But the following particulars of a limited number of concrete cases which have been dealt with quite recently in a single Union may serve to illustrate some of the points above mentioned, such, for instance, as the multiplicity of the public relief agencies that are at work upon individual cases of distress, the inadequacy of each form of relief taken separately, and the not infrequent misapplication of the relief given. The cases are grouped under two headings:—

(1) The overlapping of Old Age Pensions with the Poor Law.

(2) The overlapping of the Insurance Act with the Poor Law.

The cases given under the latter head cover a period of three months only. It may be pointed out with regard to the overlapping pension relief that, in the great majority of cases, the pensions continue to be paid either to the pensioners or their relatives, the amount recovered by the Guardians being practically *nil*. The same applies in the main to benefits received under the National Insurance Act.

Another striking case came before the Guardians of

¹ Published by W. G. Lewis, 100 South Hill Park, Hampstead.

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the same Union as lately as 18th November, in which the father, an insured person, was in the infirmary at a cost of 25s. a week, the wife was receiving sick benefit at 10s. a week, and the children were being fed at the

Overlapping of Old Age Pensions and the Poor Law.

Case-paper.	Period.	Days in Infirmary.	Observations.
25798	Oct. 1913	Since 20th Oct.	Still there.
2349	Oct. 1913	22 days	
18328	Feb. 1913	10 "	Also had two Dispensary Orders.
25106	April 1913	64 "	
20520	August 1913	46 "	Two admissions.
25530	Sept. 1913	51 "	Also had three Dispensary Orders.
15349	August 1913	7 "	
6184	Sept. 1913	8 "	Also had two Dispensary Orders.
15227	Feb. 1913	25 "	
	Sept. 1913	21 "	
25448	July 1913	44 "	
	Oct. 1913	Admitted 4th Oct.	Still there.
3549	Nov. 1912	11 days	} in work-house
	Oct. 1913	22 "	
3714	Sept. 1913	49 "	

CASES OF SPECIAL INTEREST.

86	Infirmary 21/4/13 to 15/5/13	States "daughter Martha took her pension all the while she was in the infirmary."
2000	Infirmary 20/9/12 to 1/11/12 28/7/13 to 12/9/13 Workhouse 15/10/13, still there 15/10/13	"O.A.P. 5s., rent 3s. Does a little spinning when well enough." "Friends assist with food." "Applies for admission; destitute. Cannot manage on Old Age Pension."
23738	Woman in Infirmary 12/2/12 to 12/3/12 3/9/13, still there	Both man and wife Old Age Pensioners, <i>but they live apart</i> . Man takes both pensions whilst wife is in infirmary.
120	Woman in Infirmary	Both Old Age Pensioners. Man takes pension when wife away.
25628	Infirmary, 29/9/13	Still in infirmary. Son John before Board on 7th October 1913, and "excused." He has since been taking the pension "to pay the rent," but from the report of the R.O. it would appear that the pauper did not pay rent.

Overlapping of National Health Insurance and the Poor Law.

Case- paper Number.	Period. 1913.	Particulars.
18364	June to October	Man in infirmary. Wife and five children receiving 10s. weekly from N.H.I., and 7s. weekly outdoor relief. Man now (13/11/13) in infirmary, children in Poor Law Schools, and wife apart.
23575	October	Man in infirmary. Wife receiving 10s. weekly from N.H.I., and four children being fed at school.
25462	July and October	Man in workhouse (mental wards). Wife receiving 10s. from N.H.I.
25112	May to October	Man phthisical. Ill May to Oct., 10s. weekly from N.H.I. Out-relief, food ; 3s. 6d., four weeks (August). Man in infirmary 27th May to 1st July. Now at Sanatorium.
20645	July to August	Man sick, 17/7/13. Wife applies for parish doctor because the panel doctor has a notice exhibited in his surgery that he would only see panel patients at their homes on alternate days, and man had suddenly become worse. 21st July to 23rd August out-relief, 39s. 3d. on account of sickness of man, and sickness benefit not yet available.
3890	September	Widow and four children chargeable at intervals since 1900. 3rd September, woman applies for parish doctor. She is an insured person, but not entitled to panel doctor because the sickness is the result of an accident. 13/9/13, woman reported to be receiving 7s. 6d. weekly sickness benefit.
2534	May to July	9th June, man admitted to infirmary. No Insurance benefit. "Card three stamps short." Out-relief in kind, seven weeks.
18458	24/7/13 to 30/7/13 7th to 21st Oct.	Out-relief. Man sick, and Insurance benefit not sufficient. Has had six weeks' benefit at 10s. week and 30s. maternity benefit. Benefit exhausted and out-relief granted.
25601	September	Man in infirmary, 24/9/13, 8th to 11th Oct. Out-relief to wife and four children because Insurance benefit not yet received.
19295	October	Widow. Has been relieved indoor and outdoor for four years past, at intervals. Out-relief 4th to 17th Oct. 14/10/13, applies for relief, under panel doctor, because no Insurance benefit yet.

schools. Since this was written, several similar cases have come before the writer in his capacity as Chairman of a Board of Guardians.

There have been several recent cases in the same Union in which women have come into the lying-in wards for their confinement, where, of course, they received every medical care and attention, and where they are encouraged to stay till they are entirely convalescent, and have then gone out and claimed maternity benefit either themselves or through their husbands before they were really fit to go. It should be noted that, where the husband is an insured person, he usually regards the maternity benefit as his by right.

It must be remembered that all the above-mentioned cases have occurred within a few months in a single London Union, and that there are some 640 odd Unions in England and Wales only, where the same conditions prevail. Some information, though not so detailed, has been obtained from certain other parts of London, and this information seems to point in the same direction. One Relieving Officer writes: "I have had in several instances to supplement inadequate sickness benefit. Several persons have applied, not being satisfied with their panel doctor. Single women have been admitted to the lying-in wards and have obtained maternity benefit after leaving." Another Relieving Officer from the same Union writes: "I have had to supplement unemployment benefit." In another case sanatorium benefit was provided by the Insurance Committee, and four of the children were taken into the parish schools.

The Superintendent Relieving Officer of a third Union gives the following information:—

"On making inquiries into the matter of the National Health Insurance, I find we have given nearly 700 certificates to enable inmates of our infirmary and lying-in wards to draw their benefits under this Act. In very few cases, certainly less than a dozen, have the Guardians recovered anything towards their maintenance. Married

men have sent their wives into the workhouse for their confinement and then applied for a certificate to obtain the maternity benefit. I also find that certificates have been given to several single women for the same purpose, but I am unable to say for certain whether they have obtained the benefit. The same thing also applies to single persons, without dependents, who have been in our infirmary. Cases needing sanatorium treatment are always referred back to the Commissioners, but we have two cases who are receiving home treatment and the family is in receipt of relief. In one case a man, after waiting nine weeks for admission, was sent for, receiving only two hours' notice, but, as he was a widower with three children, he had to wait a further two days while arrangements were made to take his children into the workhouse, where they remained from February to July without payment. The father returned in May and went to work. In August he re-married, and we have now received another application from him for his admission to the infirmary and his children to the workhouse, as his wife has gone off and left him. He has been told to make another application for sanatorium treatment."

He adds:—

"The giving of 700 certificates must have entailed an enormous amount of labour on the infirmary staff, and when you consider that, in addition, over 500 reports were made for the Pension Authority, it can hardly be said that the Acts have decreased our labour."

The fact that 700 certificates under the Insurance Act have been given in a year in a single Union gives some indication of the extent of the overlapping between the Insurance Act and the Poor Law.

It will be noted that in all these Unions there have been many cases in which women, either married or single, have come into the lying-in wards for their confinement, and have subsequently claimed maternity benefit after their discharge. This is clearly contrary to the intention of the Act, which contemplated that the maternity benefit would be used to provide nourishment

and proper treatment for the woman during her confinement; whereas, in these cases, the Guardians have provided all that is required. Some light is thrown upon the ultimate destination of the maternity benefit in many cases by a letter written to "The Times" in July last by Miss Margaret Bondfield, the well-known woman trade unionist leader, who cites the following cases:—

"A woman having been confined, her husband went to claim the maternity benefit to which he was entitled. On the way back he met some friends, and they decided to go and have a drink. After some time, as the husband did not return, the wife got some one to go and look for him. He was found in the public house with only 1s. 3d. left in his pocket, all that remained from the maternity benefit.

"A man went away with another woman on receipt of the benefit.

"A man returned home drunk with only 14s.

"A man of respectable appearance changed a sovereign at a public-house. When asked how he came by it he said, 'Oh! I've been to see Lloyd George.'"

A Guardian of a very important extrametropolitan Union informed the writer, quite recently, that the Local Government Board are at the present moment criticising the action of his Board because, in spite of recent social legislation, there has been up to now no sort of proportionate diminution in the amount of outdoor relief granted by them. His explanation was that recent social legislation has rather increased than decreased the demand for relief.

It is unnecessary to labour the point as to the overlapping between the Unemployed Workmen Act and the Poor Law in view of the return, already referred to, which was presented to the Royal Commission on the Poor Law, but evidence upon the subject continues to accumulate, and a large proportion of the able-bodied men dealt with by the Guardians have at some time or other received relief under it. Quite recently in a certain Union a woman whose husband was found to be in Hollesley Bay,

and who was therefore in receipt of an allowance during his absence, applied for outdoor relief, and it is quite possible that without that constant vigilance which is by no means universal, duplicated relief might be granted in such cases. It would appear that in many places there is not systematic co-operation between Distress Committees and the Poor Law.

Several illustrations have been given of cases in which it has been found necessary to supplement benefits under the Insurance Act by Poor Law relief, and this tendency will probably continue. It is noteworthy that it was extremely rare in old days for any member of a friendly society to apply for parish relief, and no one can fail to remark the lowering of the standard of self-reliance under the new order of things.

But more than that, an opinion has been freely expressed that there will be a tendency for panel doctors to order into the infirmary their longer and more troublesome cases. Not long ago a panel doctor in Chelsea advised a patient to apply for admission to the infirmary, not because he was destitute—it was admitted that the relatives were in a fairly comfortable position—but because in his opinion the care of the patient was too great a strain upon them. The Guardians refused, but were eventually severely censured by the coroner.

An interesting illustration of overlapping between Part II. of the Insurance Act and the Unemployed Workmen Act came recently to the notice of the writer. It is interesting because it indicates a sequence of events which certainly would not have been anticipated by the promoters of either of these Acts, and because it illustrates the failure of two public agencies permanently to improve the condition of the person assisted. In the case in question, a builder's labourer, out of work, had applied to the Distress Committee and was admitted for the prescribed period to Hollesley Bay colony. He came out when his time expired in December last. Being still without work he applied for unemployed benefit in

January and received an allowance for some weeks. When that was exhausted he was still out of work and applied to a charitable agency for assistance, and through their intervention he was emigrated to a colony, where we may hope that he has once more become self-supporting.

School dinners and school medical treatment are a fertile source of overlapping, with the Poor Law and many other relief agencies, both public and private. The nature and extent of the overlapping varies, of course, with the vigilance of the agencies concerned. But such vigilance is not very fashionable; indeed it is frequently condemned as "inquisitorial," and the dice are heavily loaded against careful administration.

It would be possible to multiply illustrations of overlapping between the ever-increasing number of public relief agencies to almost any extent. But it is hardly necessary to labour the point. It stands to reason that if we multiply relief agencies without establishing any systematic co-operation between them, overlapping will increase in proportion. The confusion at present is almost indescribable.

Since the first part of this paper was written there has been a fresh development which is of better augury for the future. Last June the President of the Local Government Board presented to Parliament an important return dealing with the total amount of direct "public beneficiary assistance," and promised to repeat this return in future years. The return is for England and Wales only, and therefore not complete; moreover, it only contains the details of the expenditure and not the numbers of people assisted. Still, it is a step in the right direction, and goes some way towards meeting the evils pointed out in the earlier part of this paper.

The return includes expenditure upon (1) The relief of the poor; (2) The Unemployed Workmen Act, 1905; (3) Hospitals provided by local authorities other than Poor Law infirmaries; (4) Education (Provision of Meals) Act, 1906; (5) Medical inspection and treatment of school

children ; (6) Other expenses of elementary and higher education ; (7) Old age pensions for England and Wales, 1910-11.

The return covers a period of twenty years from 1890-91 to 1910-11, and shows that expenditure in England and Wales upon "direct beneficiary assistance" has grown in that time from £14,250,000 to £51,896,000. We have now to add to this £7,500,000 for the first year of the National Insurance Act, but this last item is for the whole country. So long as we have a regular return of this kind, completed and brought up to date, the public, at least, cannot say that they are acting in the dark and that this huge and growing mortgage upon the industry of the country has been imposed without their knowledge and consent. We are chiefly indebted for this return to the wise importunity of Mr Geoffrey Drage, who pointed out in a letter to "The Times" that this is in no sense a party question, and in fact the return was asked for by members on both sides of the House. Mr Drage, however, points out that these figures do not reveal the whole truth.

"When (he says) we have got these figures completed for direct beneficiary assistance we can then turn to indirect assistance such as that involved in cheap railway and tram fares, labour exchanges, public baths and wash-houses, etc. Even so we shall leave out the vast expenditure on public health and sanitation, factory and workshop and mine inspection, which appears to me to be more in the category of what I should term sanitary police." We may perhaps now add to "indirect beneficiary assistance" the provision by the State and municipal authorities of housing accommodation at less than an economic rent.

But the return is of course not complete unless it includes the number of people assisted as well as the total of the expenditure. For this is an even more important question from an economic point of view. There is at present a tendency to live in a fool's paradise. The official returns of pauperism have of late shown moderate

decreases, upon the strength of which certain writers in the Press and certain prominent politicians have shown a tendency towards complacency, and even towards exultation. But, as has been already stated, the official statistics no longer cover the ground. When we say that pauperism has decreased we are juggling with words, because the actual burden of pauperism and the actual number of *de facto* paupers is far larger than it has ever been before in the history of the country.

Such being the existing conditions, what is the remedy? Some of us would consider that the best and most obvious remedy is to be found in the recommendation of the Majority Report of the Royal Commission that all public assistance should be brought under one authority. But if this is impossible in the present state of public opinion, then we must look elsewhere for a remedy. Hitherto the course of legislation has followed the lines of the Minority Report rather than those of the Majority. It has extended public relief in most of the directions indicated by the Minority, and has carried into effect many of their recommendations. But one of these recommendations—the only one for introducing some sort of co-ordination and control into this chaos—namely, the suggested registration of all forms of public relief, has been ignored altogether. It is rather significant that no one of the signatories of that report has, as we might have been entitled to expect, raised any sort of protest against the omission. If we are to have the policy of the Minority, we must have it as a whole and not in part. It is always an easy and a popular step to extend public relief. It is quite otherwise when it is proposed to establish any sort of control. Mr Charles Booth recognised this long ago when he proposed a scheme of universal pensions, because he recognised the impracticability of the then proposed limitations. But under the guidance of the authors of the Minority Report we have travelled far beyond old age pensions, and now practically anyone who comes within the income-tax limit is qualified

for some form of State endowment, either for themselves or for their dependents. The onus is surely upon those who have led us into this labyrinth to lead us out. Perhaps even now, at the eleventh hour, they will come forward and press for the initiation of a scheme of registration which formed originally an integral part of their proposals, and for a system of organised co-operation.

The first practical step appears then to be to press for a searching and judicial inquiry into existing conditions, an inquiry from which politicians and theorists alike should be rigorously excluded. Disorganised voluntary charity is an evil, but disorganised State charity is a far worse one, because it is on a much greater scale and is much less capable of control. Surely the time has come when public-spirited men of both parties should agree to exclude these questions from the sphere of party politics, and to put a stop once and for all to this legislative chaos which is supplementing wages, increasing the cost of living, pauperising the poor, and perpetuating poverty. Modern free traders may be reminded once more of the words of Cobden, which indicate a very different social policy:—

"Mine," he says, "is that masculine sort of charity which would inculcate in the minds of the working classes the love of independence, the privilege of self-respect, the disdain of being patronised or petted, the desire to accumulate, and the ambition to rise."

The Prime Minister recently used these words:—

"I do not think there is any doctrine more fatal to the root principle of democratic government than that it should consist in the constant amelioration, at great expense to the community, of the social conditions of the less-favoured class in the country at the sole and exclusive expense of other classes" ("Times," 12th July).

They may be commended to the attention of the democracy of this country.

BOOKS ON SOCIOLOGY

SOCIAL WORK IN LONDON, 1869-1912

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